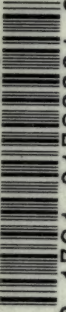


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[*Second impression*]

NAPOLEON

A PLAY

BY

HERBERT TRENCH

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD

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ACT I

ACT I. SCENE I

The Abbey Farm-house.

TIME: *August in the year 1805.*

The interior of St. Radegund's Abbey Farm-house, in the country, near Dover, Kent. A Study. At the back is a door leading into a laboratory.

DOCTOR WICKHAM, *a grey-haired man with a powerful face, comes out of the laboratory with a retort in his hand, and absently warms it before the fire; he then places it on the table, and turning to the fireplace grasps the mantelpiece with both of his knotted hands outstretched, and stares absorbed in painful thought into the fire.*

His WIFE, ANNE WICKHAM, enters.

Anne
Doctor

I have brought my little chair. Do I disturb you?
You're the only woman ever born who never disturbs a laboratory. You make the room larger for one. You make my fingers steadier. For a savage temper that's soothing.

Anne

My savage! Said to please me! I do nothing; just fit in.

Doctor

No, no.

Anne

To-day we've been married thirty years. Did you remember?

Doctor

No.

Anne

To celebrate the day I am going to leave you. What say you if I leave you for a while (don't laugh) to fend for yourselves?

Doctor

Are you serious?

Anne

Smile! Listen. I am, after all, French-born. You remember that escaped French prisoner we found starving under the garden wall? What he told us—How at Portsmouth the French prisoners are packed on hulks—

five hundred to a single deck—no air and no light—packed so close that all the five hundred at night have to turn over—side to side—at a signal? No games except rat races, and dicing away their rags for crumbs. I must go down to Portsmouth to mend their clothes; play with them; keep them human.

Doctor How do you propose to go?

Anne If I cannot ride there, I'll walk—persuade the captain of the hulk!

Doctor There was once a Quaker maidservant who walked from Greece to Constantinople to reason with the Grand Turk of the inner light!

Anne Ah, what inner light have I? Still, one must go by one's glimmer. Smile! (*With her fingers on his cheeks she attempts to make him smile.*)

Doctor Well, you shall go! Never mind what I say to-day.

Anne What ails my man?

Doctor I could make all Kent and Sussex ring with rheumatism, but that's not it—I have, my dear, ill news.

Anne What is it?

Doctor Geoffrey sailed from Dover this morning.

Anne *Our* Geoffrey?

Doctor Sailed on his own boat.

Anne But the old sloop has been laid up these two years.

Doctor Ever since war broke out again with Bonaparte.

Anne Sailed whither?

Doctor Who knows?

Anne Why should we be surprised?

Doctor By our eldest son?—Trained by me for the sciences—trebly trained? Why play fast and loose with them thus suddenly, a second time? Wasn't volunteering with the French in Italy years ago enough? After long chains of experiments I am on the edge of breaking up air and water into their gases—But I am on the edge too, of breaking up myself. Who can assist me in these wilds but Geoffrey, with his level head, and his habit of

exactitude? He has what few have, the scientific idea. His calculations were useful as a control of mine. I had counted on him. Now again he vanishes. I confess (*Pauses*)

Anne I see, it cuts deep.

Doctor And at what a moment? Do you think you would recognize Boulogne, where you and I lived peacefully so long? Now a vast bristling fortress, blockaded by us. And French privateers scouring the Channel—all the light-ships left lightless against the enemy. Can Geoffrey's sloop escape?

Anne I wonder. He took a long leave of me last night. For months I have felt something smouldering and brooding.

Doctor He said nothing?

Anne Yes, he said a very strange thing. He said he had made a discovery:—The discovery of the *organic* in the ties between human beings.

Doctor The discovery of the *organic*—in the relations between human beings? Nonsense. We are solitary atoms. Ever since the Renaissance we have all—men and nations—lived apart:—Lives separate—individual—distinct; minds essentially and increasingly alone!

Anne I will not have him blamed. He is a slow ripener, like all your family—shy of speech, poor lamb—sure of little—hard to shake from his purpose.

Doctor What is he but shaken from his purpose to-day?—He, the student of tides, sea-map-maker, hydrographer? Isn't that a craft wide enough for a lifetime? Where's the continuity in this?

Anne Suppose he can stand inaction no longer?—Wants to get from maps into the world of four dimensions and test his discovery on himself? Don't we all feel that undertow of the war-tide, sucking us out? Haven't you yourself five times volunteered?

Doctor But why this mystery? I dislike it. Why not trust us, his own, who bred him?

Anne Why not trust him, our own, whom we have bred? Geoffrey sings in the middle of the note—breathes light with every pore of his beautiful young body. He is set on some high mark invisible to us.

Doctor Tell me again exactly what he said.

Anne He said, 'Mother, I think the secret of living—where life seems so chaotic, flowing and unstable—lies in the discovery of an organic soul, first in ourselves; then in other human creatures; and finally even in the mysterious currents between ourselves and them.' He said, 'If I have discovered the organic in that final stage—an inward shape and purpose in the relations between men, I must use the knowledge; I must test it. I am going to put it to the severest proof of all.' I said, 'How can you put to the proof a discovery of the organic soul in human society?' And he answered, gaily, as he kissed me,—'I must bring it to bear on the most powerful living antagonist.'

Pause . . . DR. WICKHAM sees in his wife's face a first sudden surmise and apprehension as to whom this antagonist may be. He tries to turn aside her surmise.

Doctor Rainbow-chasing!

Anne But if he has sailed—

Doctor Well?

Anne And sailed to France in mid-war-time, as you say—

Doctor Well?

Anne The antagonist whom he has in mind may be Napoleon.

Doctor He may be mad, but hardly so mad as that. How should he get near Napoleon? Does he think to be admitted to the presence? How should he deal with Napoleon? As well try to ride a comet. No; it's some rainbow-chasing! The dash of the sublime in Geoffrey. Well! if he draws that from you, my dear, I suppose he has his reward.

Anne Sublime that wants reward is not the sublime.
Doctor Even the beautiful and the true are not wanted here
 —they have to be enforced.

Anne How? The things of the spirit enforced?

Doctor By sheer compassion for the sufferings of the worker
 himself. He must have hewn himself into the very
 statue of deformity. Look at me! (*Pause*) Another
 thing stumbles me: where's Raymond?

Anne Raymond? *Two* sons I cannot lose.

Doctor There's Margaret coming through the orchard! She
 is late.

The girl MARGARET enters breathlessly.

Margaret Good morning, Father, guess what I've seen! Oh
 my motherkin, the wind's so gloriously high on the
 Down—I've been running so fast—But the news, the
 news! I'll give you five, I'll give you fifty, I'll give
 you till doomsday to guess! The news, so hard to keep!—
 I was sworn to secrecy till they were clean out to sea.

Doctor What have you to tell us?

Margaret You know where the brass half-circle, with the names
 of the ports of France on it, is let into the wall on the
 high cliff? I ran there—they let me look through the
 telescope over the Channel—there she was!—far, out
 beyond the undercliff. Geoffrey's old sloop, all gay and
 glittering, beating out to sea! And a cloud-shadow
 racing after her. I could make out the little figures on
 board, and who was at the wheel—Geoffrey himself!
 For then, just as though he knew I was watching, he
 came out of the wheel-house, took off his cap, and bowed,
 saluting the cliffs of England!

Anne Ah!

Margaret Imagine it, Geoffrey's sailed to France, and Ray-
 mond with him!

Doctor Fools, fools!

Margaret How I wish—how I wish I were with them! Our
 seagulls diving from the cliff!

- Anne* You have dropped a piece of paper.
- Margaret* (*Picking it up*) As they were going Raymond threw me this, for you.
- Anne* (*Reading*) 'Mother, don't be alarmed at Jan's absence'—Jan's absence!—my little Jan! (*Continues reading*) 'He begged to be allowed to sail, and as I know Geoffrey would not hear of it, I have smuggled Jan on board as stowaway.'
- Doctor* Jan!—my little scamp—a thing scarce weaned—Fools! Fools! Fools!
- Margaret* How else can they come back sea-wise? . . . Mother, why are you so pale?
- Anne* Will Jan keep his twelfth birthday on the Goodwins?
- Margaret* Shall I go and get you some cordial, Mother?
- Anne* Stripped of three sons in one day! . . .— . . . After all, Meg is right. They're ripe for sea-faring at twelve years old.
- Margaret* Mother, he's with Geoffrey—he'll be safe with Geoffrey.
- Anne* I suppose it is human nature.
- Doctor* Human nature!—if they've no better counsellor than that! . . . (*Pause*) My dear, will you go to your French prisoners?
- Anne* Not now. The house would be too empty without the boys. I will stay with you, my friend, until Geoffrey comes back.
- The DOCTOR goes out.*
- Anne* Ah, these sons, these sons—We make them—bring them into life, and go through our little troubles for them. Like birds, they must be twice-born, and break away from us and the nest again. Suddenly they too have purposes, wiser than ours. But O why should these purposes be so unspeakable? What is in these young creatures' hearts, I say—Who will tell us that?

ACT I. SCENE II

The Cliff's Face.

It is night, under the precipitous cliff near Cap Crèche on the Coast of France, east of Boulogne. Slabbed rocks just emerge from the sea at the foot of the cliff, which is partly seen in outline. A French MARINE GUARD, with a great lantern, enters on the rocks from the east side. He hauls out a rope which hangs down the cliff; sits down, and fastens to the rope's end the lantern between his feet on the ground.

*Marine
Guard*

(Shouting up the cliff after listening to the Sentinel's challenge above on the cliff-top) Bon quart! All's well! (No answer) Bon quart! (To himself) I missed him, yes, but wait, wait A wise old owl sat in an oak—the more he saw, the less he spoke! Misjudged the distance, did I? Well, the sun was shining behind my back, and so happen I under-judged it. But I was aiming at the young devil over rocks and boulders—and he in shade, and heat rising—so happen I over-judged it. A see-saw affair! (Fluttering his palm this way and that.)

Voice

(From the cliff-top, in the remote distance overhead) Ohé, Old Efficiency!

Marine

'Ohé, Old Efficiency'—, this from them that can't handle an oar! No, I'll tell you, (Addressing his musket) sitting so mum on your butt-end, why I missed him :—He came up so young and foolish after his dive, smiling into my very face,—that I was staggered, and let him off. But you wait, wait, wait.

He rises and adjusts the lantern with its light towards Boulogne; then goes round the cliff eastward in the direction of Fort Croy.

A boat with three cloaked men in it cautiously appears out of the darkness round the cliff along the rocky slabs of the foreshore. They are GEOFFREY WICKHAM, his brother RAYMOND WICKHAM, and WATT, a seaman.

Wickham (In a low clear tone) He's passed—the shore patrol's passed. Bring her in close.

RAYMOND jumps ashore. WICKHAM lands.

Wickham In half an hour he'll return to put this lamp out. Now then, (Addressing RAYMOND) jump in.

Raymond (Stepping back into the boat reluctantly) Why must I go back? I'll land with you, Geoffrey!

Wickham (After a pause of astonishment) You've had your orders.

Raymond Yes, yes—Take charge of sloop and papers.

Wickham Just so—Off you go!

Raymond Look here, let Watt take charge (Pointing to the seaman). I'm going ashore with you, Geoffrey.

Wickham If risk is what you want, you've had it for the last twenty seconds.

Raymond Halt! I refuse. (Jumps back to shore.)

Wickham Mountebank! (To WATT) My pistols are under the boat-cloak in the stern. (He takes the pistols.)

Raymond (Folding his arms with a mocking smile) Shoot away!

Wickham We are under nine miles of batteries.

Raymond Don't I know every tussock of this cliff from here to Calais?

Wickham No doubt. But the cliff may not recognize you, just now.

Raymond Why, I slipped ashore in the dinghy here, yesterday—went through four lines of huts and canteens—and got clean away again.

Wickham You slipped ashore without orders? (Turning to WATT) Is this so?

Watt (Nods) I didn't report it against him, sir.

Wickham (Taking off his hat he throws it down on the flat rock, and takes RAYMOND by the shoulder up to the lantern, so that the light is on both their faces) So ho! The toast is mutiny! The night glasses of all three island forts are already braced on us. We may as well sink decently and in order. (Regarding RAYMOND'S face curiously) No, this is not the face of a changeling—this is my brother's face.

Raymond I fear so—always the same old face.

Wickham A pity—Well, here we part, for good.

Raymond Why part?

Wickham I prefer not to send my brother dingle dangle from a yard-arm; and I don't want a deserter.

Raymond Oh come!—deserter?

Wickham Wasn't there a clear pledge that you would serve?

Raymond Damme, Geoffrey! I'm no longer in the cradle! Are we crossed on a Government commission?—No. What's our errand? I have it! Cousin Élise, that I used to gather bait with—the light-foot limpet-gatherer! By all accounts she has no lack of rescuers.

Wickham I go to lodge at my old lodgings—over Nan's Tavern.

Raymond Trust me with an attempt on Bonaparte's headquarters, and I'll serve! Or have you crossed for a mere idea?

Wickham Yes. For a mere idea. I'm not on a military cutting-out expedition. But I'll trust you with this.—In case things miscarried, I needed you as mate, to take back charts and papers on board, and now Jan, your stow-away. If for nothing else's sake then for the sake of them who think him lost.

RAYMOND *shakes his head.*

Watt Master Ray, no coltish tricks!

Raymond Still the colt, you see, to the men you expect me to command. By Jove! I'll land independently!

Wickham (Pointing up the cliff) Up with you! (Long pause) Halt, Ray! Ray, I'll drop the skipper. Mine's a forlorn

hope, that I can neither explain nor betray. Could I explain, you would not oppose. Will you go aboard?

Raymond I am the untrained ignoramus—you, the eternal student—Eight years between us two, and three educations; granted to you, and refused to me. Though you'd rather be nameless, I want to make a name. May I not have as bold a plan as other men—and a map of the batteries sewn in this waistcoat pocket? Five nights hence I'll sup in Dover!

Wickham Your ghost may reach Dover in a buffet of sound! Supper's doubtful.

Raymond To-night I'll dine with the Tenth legion. (*He mounts the rope of the lantern, hand over fist.*)

Wickham Take these pistols. (*Hands the pistols.*)

Watt (*To WICKHAM*) You'll be unarmed, sir—let the cub go.

Raymond Thanks, Watt! (*Taking the pistols*) Thanks, Geoffrey. (*He climbs rapidly out of sight.*)

Wickham (*Half to himself, looking up*) He's missed his footing—done for! No, he's round! By Jove, out of sight! I hate that he should end, hating me so. After all, others like to answer for themselves, as well as I.

A gun booms.

Wickham (*To WATT*) Take charge of all aboard.

Watt Ay, ay, sir. There'll be slippery cracks between the slabs—what light will you have along the beach?

Wickham More than I care for, Watt. Ten thousand burning wrongs, on both sides of the water.

He stands looking up. A stone falls with a paper.

Wickham (*Stoops to pick it up, and reads it*) He's reached the top. Heigho!

He sighs; and departs rapidly round the cliff, disappearing into the darkness to the westward.

ACT I. SCENE III

Nan's Tavern, in Boulogne, on the quay.

WICKHAM *is looking out of the window and contemplating the noisy forest of masts outside.*

Wickham (Putting his fingers in his ears) Pity you live in a city, Nan. Plants too near poison each other. Give every one his proper patch of loneliness, say I! (*He returns to the middle of the room.*)

Nan (*Who has been pouring out coffee*) I let you sleep on through the morning. You slept right through the shipwright's hammering and pile-driving. I came in and feasted my eyes on you, my lamb. You're brown—why you might be a Corsair, child?

Wickham What! Hasn't shore-life damaged my complexion?

Nan I like my dreamers to be of bronze—and not dank as though they were grown in a cellar. Why it was on you, my firstling, that I spent my soul of nights—thought-reading your little wizened face. Was it hunger, or thirst, or wind that pinched ye? Who was there but I to guess what you wanted? And now you can speak by the bushel. And that's why poor old Nan can't read your face. What have you come back for?

Wickham (*Smiling*) Ah!

Nan In these wild times, through the blockade?—

Wickham A long yarn, Nurse.

Nan Ay, and I'm going to have it . . . You got the sealed packet, addressed here to your old lodging, and that waited here so long, which I sent across by a smuggler?

Wickham Yes.

Nan You're not in love—?

Wickham There's but one lady in all Boulogne for me—But

she's a Catholic. When did you last go to mass, Nan?

Nan No such havers!—you've not crossed to see me. Mass, my dear? Not so often as I ought. It's the steepness of that Cathedral hill—many puffings—little strength—and no arm of yours now to lean on.

Wickham My mother's unhappy to think of your house under our English fire.

Nan Ah, your mother! What battles I used to have with her over you all! But with her, that was so gentle, Satan himself could not be angry. Is she still crazed with love for your father? My God—to leave France to follow a man!

Wickham She's torn between two countries. Strange to wake here in my old lodging, and not in my old attic!

Nan All the winds of heaven whistle through your old attic. The hole was made by an English cannon-ball.

Wickham Monstrous! You sent in a claim for damages?

Nan O ay—twelve hundred francs. 'Sire, I am a poor old woman' . . . Beautifully written it was . . . 'This is your Majesty's war—but the State's hard on us poor . . .'

Wickham The State . . . ha! ha!

Nan But the State's a mighty thing, my dear.

Wickham Only large-scale housekeeping, Nan.

Nan You don't set much store by the State, my dear!

Wickham I shall, when it lets us all be kings and queens. Does Bonaparte come down to Boulogne?

Nan Often, often! Swings in over the cobbles from Paris, at two in the morning—at the gate where the Tree of Liberty was planted—in his great Berlin carriage. The sentries see him working inside—with a lamp behind his bed.

Wickham Ah!

Nan And sometimes after holding two reviews, he steals

out at night—in a large soft hat—to the crossroad's chapel, yonder up on the downs, to hear the hearsay of the fisher-folk. . . . But why have you come over, my dear? Still at the old sea-survey, with your leadlines and instruments?

Wickham Yes. Come to work here quietly. If folk remembered I'm half English, they might grow suspicious—send me inland to be interned at Arras.

Nan What talks we'll have!

Wickham Yes, but no politics!

Nan Nor of politicians—

Wickham Poor creatures that bribe us with mean reasons for taking great measures!

Nan 'The saving of France' indeed! What do they mean when they talk of 'France'? Is there, my dear, a real France?

Wickham Yes, Nan, the real France is you!

Nan How d'you make a living nowadays?

Wickham I make nautical instruments—and instead of selling 'em, use them mostly myself.

Nan And that packet, that waited for you here so long?

Wickham Years ago in peace-time—the days of the Consulate—I sent in to the Paris Institute of Sciences a paper on the law of forecasting Channel tides. Well, that packet was an answer! It invited me to an interview!

Nan But the delay, the delay! The Consulate's gone now! How'll you be received?

Wickham Isn't the letter of invitation a sort of safe-conduct? Anyhow I've crossed on the strength of it.

Nan They may call you a natural philosopher for knowing the currents as you do—But it's my belief you were born a mackerel!

Wickham Flatterer! I'll make you read my book on tides!

ÉLISE, a brilliant lady, and GENERAL DUBOIS enter. They talk in a low tone, seated at a table.

- Nan* (Aside to WICKHAM) There's your cousin Élise!
- Wickham* Élise?
- Nan* Yes—she's gay, but she's a kind customer to me, for old time's sake, and brings half the town here for coffee.
- Wickham* Hush! I want to meet nobody.
NAN takes coffee to ÉLISE.
- Nan* Mademoiselle, your servant!
- Élise* Dear Nan! General, I could stick a pin into Nan for jealousy! She's so young, and makes better coffee than I do. And she's all the mode!
- General* (To NAN) A bottle of Chambertin, Madame.
NAN retires.
- Élise* (In a withering tone) And so you're going to marry!
I congratulate you!
- General* *Force majeure!* Let us forget it, in this ante-chamber to Paradise. I haven't been off duty in the saddle for eighteen months, and now I'm sitting with you. It makes one tremble.
- Élise* You interest me.
- General* Élise!
- Élise* Do you interest me? I wonder. What sentimental cherubs men are! Tumbling back over the clouds of glory—What fools, we poor women!
- General* Why, Élise?
- Élise* While the grossness of reality stares us in the face—to dream that you can have for us more than a momentary kindness.—There's money, of course.
- General* What is money?
- Élise* Why, I'd sell my soul for it.
- General* No, no, you would not. Come to the big and brilliant world! Beauty like yours—
- Élise* I know—my eye's very bright, as eyes go in the provinces! My beauty! If you knew all the terrors it creates in me! Odds gast my beauty, who'll take care of me in my old age?
- General* Élise!

Élise *Tiens!* That maid of mine!—What carelessness—
she'll drive me mad! (*She carefully adjusts a curl before
a hand-mirror, and in a larger mirror catches sight of
WICKHAM. As WICKHAM is rising to go out, ÉLISE recog-
nizes him, starts violently, and advances with both hands
out.*)

Élise Haughty creature, you were going to cut me!

Wickham (*Smiling*) I was!

Élise Come and join us. (*She motions him to her table.*)

WICKHAM, surprised, bows, hesitates.

ÉLISE returns to the GENERAL.

Forgive me, General—a near relative!

General I suspect relatives.

Élise An old playmate.

General I detest old playmates.

Élise Brought up to the sea.

General And I abhor the sea.

Élise A genius shipwrecked on a desert England! (*In
a lower tone*) Nonsense, I haven't seen him for three
years. (*Aloud*) General Dubois, my cousin M. Wickham,
(*She pronounces it 'Vicamp'*) a distinguished young man
of science.

General Charmed to extend the circle of my acquaintance.

Élise When did you escape from England, Geoffrey?

Wickham Quite lately.

General Through one of the regular escape-agents? You paid
double what you bargained for, I'll warrant!

Wickham You're right there, sir.

*An ORDERLY in a military cloak enters with
a letter. His cloak is wet.*

Orderly A letter for *la patronne*.

Nan (*Takes the letter: puts on spectacles, and reads*) My
dears, the Head-quarter Staff are going to look into my
claim for damages. (*To the ORDERLY*) Coffee, Monsieur?

Orderly Thank you, Madame.

NAN and the ORDERLY talk in an undertone.

General (To WICKHAM) Have you seen the camps on the cliffs yet?

Wickham Not yet.

Élise Two mushroom cities sprung up! Ten miles of merry little thatched huts, with streets, and gardens, and canaries, and chapels, and even their camp-theatre, where I sometimes act.

Wickham You!

Élise And look at the harbour! The thousands of pennons all waving—the thousands of ships all heaving—with one man's heart!

Wickham Whose?

General (Ironically) You must understand, sir, that ladies in the provinces have one demi-god, Napoleon.

Élise What a mind! What an artist! Take his personal device—the 'N' laurelled! Match me that, among your Caesars!

General Very imposing for them on whom it is meant to impose!

Élise General, don't be an iceberg. Can Goethe match his bulletins? Epics—Iliads in brief—Rude halting sentences, but every halt a victory! His every word a decree! Every leaf of his despatches, a laurel!

General Round his own brows!

Wickham He has mind. Has he the music of the mind? Or has France found a flawless master?

General Flawless—no. His tactics are damned poor. Tactics don't interest him—he prepares far too little,—and he's personally rash. Take his habit of reconnoitring alone at night, almost in the enemy lines.

Wickham I like that!

General But I grant you, his scale of strategy's superb!—The feinting this way and that, to put 'em off—(Waving his wine-glass)—Egypt, Ireland, West Indies, and then the blow at the enemy's very heart!

Wickham And the enemy's very heart is—?

General Wickham Do you drop from Heaven, sir?—London.
Indeed?

*A GUARDSMAN and a MARINE GUARD enter.
They sit at another table in fatigued attitudes,
drinking.*

Élise (*With a nod towards them*) Do look at my audience yonder; I act for them! I am fresh back from rehearsal. I am Bononia, Goddess of Boulogne—wave a scroll to the Emperor when he arrives, and repeat the poetry of the Prefect, conceive it! (*She rises and declaims:*)

‘Bononia, daughter of the marshes drear,
And the entire department of the Pas de Calais,
Rejoice at your august presence.

In order to humble the overweening British
And settle peace on Earth

God created Napoleon Bonaparte; and then rested.’

General O perfect, perfect Prefect!

Élise But those adorable infantry! How simply they make love to me!

Wickham The men are keen to cross the water?

General (*Pointing out of the window*) We are all gay as that bunting—officially.

Wickham And you, sir, have succeeded?

General (*Modestly*) Ah, well!

Élise Succeeded! He’s to be married to an heiress, with a wedding gift of a million francs from the Emperor.

Wickham Why end there? Field-marshal may blossom into prince!

General I may get some fiddling little duchy down in Italy. Still, we are slaves who can’t call our souls our own.—We only hope he’s got one! But his violent caprice!—Why has he left me in the air without a command?

Élise (*To WICKHAM*) The dear General is no longer in command at Dijon.

Wickham Is it jealousy or promotion?

- Élise* Let's hope it's the fiddling little duchy!
- General* But after all, it's only the bellows of war blows a man to white heat! War—the great lottery!—how it quickens the pace! You gamble on the crest of it. A Turcoman charge—(*Gesture*)—and you've all Europe in your haversack—or a grave you know nothing about!—War's *natural*!
- Wickham* And clumsy as nature!
- Élise* You gallop across Europe shouting, 'Brotherhood! Brotherhood!'—and you cleave your brother from nape to middle! Isn't there something of dingy subterfuge about the mixture?
- General* Dingy subterfuge?—Of course! That's war.
- Élise* I can't *see* the fallacy, but I *smell* one! (*She holds her handkerchief to her nose, in fairy disgust.*)
- General* Don't be jealous of me, for the bauble palaces, stars, nor even kisses, that fall to me! They weren't meant for me.—They are for the legions that fell at my side. I am the chance survivor—the paltry symbol, that stands for them.
- Wickham* (*Rising*) For that, sir, I salute you.
- Élise* (*Fanning herself*) *Mes compliments*, General, I disagree! You handle masses, and you think in herds. You gallop back into the dark ages. Since the brute in man's eternal, come let's adore it! Your greed's for quantity.—Now take this absurd Cousin of mine! He may be queer, but he's for quality. He keeps the poise that your galloper loses—
- Wickham* Élise, Élise!
- Élise* He thinks the art of life's to follow field-paths. His intoxication is perfect sobriety—not the smoky mind of the herd. Ambition! La! He is more ambitious than you.—He wants nothing less than the air, space, and light of all Nature; but himself to take up as little room as possible. He drinks pure water, eats anything, walks and sails much.—An idea strikes him—the texture of

light in a valley; the shape of a splash of water; the perfection of two and two making four; or of an adjective agreeing with a substantive; he sits down on a sea-rock or country wall—with the sheep-bells clinking in the next coombe—to figure it out. Looking into that gives him exquisite pleasure, that makes his senses grow finer; costs no one any butcherly discomfort; and kills off no friends or enemies of mine in droves. (*Raising her glass towards WICKHAM*) This rarefied and harmless kind of gentleman for me!

Wickham
General

She's roasting me, General. Élise, have mercy!
(*Angrily, to ÉLISE*) You presume to set the civilian against the soldier?

Élise
General

Yes. Let's confess, General, you and I are birds of prey. And this sea-going gentleman is Noah's dove!

Élise
Wickham

Submit the case to the first three men who come in.

General

Nonsense, I'll be off.

Élise

By God, sir, you will hear the verdict out!

General

Begin with the two yonder, and this orderly!

Wickham

Done with you!

General

Why pit one against the other?

Guardsman

I insist. (*To soldiers*) Tell me what you think—Which is the finer life, the soldier's or the civilian's?

General

Finer life? Hum! A cognac, Madame! If the soldier's in the Imperial Guard, why, damme, the soldier's!

Marine

(*To MARINE GUARD*) What say you?

Guard

Certainly not the sailor's if he's got to teach the soldier how to row!

Guardsman

(*Drawing his pistol*) If I did lose an eye in Egypt, my pistol eye's left.

General

(*Putting up pistol*) No jokes, men!

Marine

Don't the fisherman's courage want more staying power than the soldier's? Ask their wives, waiting for 'em along the coast—bent double in the wind, like our trees—what their men go through, year in, year out! I'm a longshoreman bred myself.

Guard

Élise Hurrah! Now for the orderly. (*She turns to the messenger, who has been standing drinking at the bar.*)

Nan The poor orderly's all wet—his horse stumbled in the river.

Élise He's had a sousing—he'll give us cooler sense! Decide, sir!

Orderly (*Turning half round with coffee-cup in one hand and saucer in the other*) Whom do the men themselves prefer to lead them, Mademoiselle? Listen to their talk, about the bivouac. Is it the hell-for-leather leader that they trust? No. Is it the bravest? No. It's the man of judgement. But judgement is a civil quality—it looks to the general well-being—admits benevolence, humanity—and (*Bowing to ÉLISE*) all the graces! I plump for the civil!

Élise Bravo, bravo! Infinitely obliged to you, sir.

Orderly But (*turning wholly round, full-face, and addressing himself to the GENERAL*) a word with you, sir. (*He leads him forward, and speaks in a low tone*) General Dubois, why are you not at Dijon?

General (*Much surprised*) My God!—Napoleon! Sire—(*Is silent*).

Napoleon General Dubois, why are you not at Dijon?

General (*In a low tone*) Sire, you relieved me of my command at Dijon, and I came to Paris.

Napoleon You have doubtless received the permission of the Minister of War to leave Dijon?

General No, Sire, but having nothing more to do at Dijon, I came to Paris—and from Paris here, on urgent private affairs.

Napoleon Do you remember the two windmills of Terlincthon?

General Sire—?

Napoleon You have a bad topographical memory. About a mile from this, there's a grassy hollow, a half-circle under the windmills of Terlincthon.

General Ah yes, I remember—the foundation of the Legion of Honour.

Napoleon Yes. There, a twelve-month ago, under the eyes of seventy thousand men, I fixed on your breast the cross of the Legion. But if (*Looking at his watch*), within two hours, you are not on your way back to Dijon, I'll have you shot there, to-day, under the eyes of the same army.

The GENERAL bows and goes out. Almost immediately he returns to the doorway and beckons violently to WICKHAM, behind NAPOLEON'S back. WICKHAM follows him. One of NAPOLEON'S STAFF-OFFICERS enters and stands in attendance. NAPOLEON turns to the SOLDIER and MARINE GUARD.

Napoleon (*Taking each by an ear*) Now then, my lads, soldier and sailor, squabbling like curs and sea-gulls, under the very eyes of the enemy fleet? Must I teach fire and water to mix? Scuffle no more or, when the first great action's afoot, you'll be told off to bed, with a sucking bottle apiece!

Another STAFF-OFFICER enters. He salutes. Several old men come in after him.

Officer Good heavens, sir! We rode up to the West Cliff camp that your Majesty was to inspect!

Napoleon My horse tripped on a cable in the river—a chain under the water, mooring the prison-barges—I got a ducking. Do you see how that fellow holds himself? (*Indicating the MARINE GUARD*) I'll bet you he has a weal where the shoulder-strap cuts. Undo the strap! (*OFFICER obeys*) Look, as I thought, it chafes.

Officer Your Majesty designed the uniform yourself.

Napoleon But not that strap, fool! Have the equipment altered. (*Turning to an old Sailor*) Ah, I remember you. I consulted you about rowing, you old conger eel! Weren't you once in the galleys?—a galley-slave on a sheepskin, chained to an oar. You used to puff your fleas at visitors, through a little whisk of paper, eh?—Hou, hou, hou—like that!

- Old Sailor* (Falling on his knees) But I'm a cooper now, sir.
- Nan* Ay, he's a cooper, highly respected.
- Napoleon* Ah, but is he a *good* cooper; or a contractor?
- Old Sailor* I do make water-barrels for the transports, sir.
- Napoleon* I thought so, a contractor! I've seen your water-barrels on the quay—they've only *wooden* hoops—they leak!
- Old Sailor* Only a *very* little leak, sir!
- Napoleon* Make the hoops of iron, dear Mr. Cooper, if you don't wish to go back to a sheepskin and a paper flea-trumpet.
- Nan* Oh, your Majesty, don't say that!
- Napoleon* Ah, Madame of the house?
- NAN curtsies. NAPOLEON offers his snuff-box to NAN, and tries to take some himself, but finds it wet, and shuts the box with a snap.*
- Napoleon* Didn't you send me a petition for damages done by an English cannon-ball?
- Nan* Yes, your Majesty, this bloody siege is your Majesty's siege, not my siege—my roof's ruined.
- Napoleon* Let me see the cannon-ball! How much damage did you claim?—Twelve hundred francs?
- Nan* Twelve hundred, your gracious Majesty, what with the roof and loss of lodgers—
- Napoleon* (To the STAFF-OFFICER) Pay her eight hundred. We can't allow for the loss of lodgers. You have no lodgers left?
- Nan* Only one.
- Napoleon* Only one? And he doesn't mind cannon-balls. Where is he?
- Nan* Oh a shy bear of a young man, that it'd be sheer cruelty to see. He only likes fishermen—and hates politicians.
- Napoleon* Sensible fellow! What's the name of this paragon?
- Nan* Wickham. (She pronounces it 'Vicamp'.)
- Napoleon* Vicamp, Vicamp? A sea cartographer? Wasn't there a Memorandum on Tides, by some such man?
- Nan* An awkward and simple young man, your Majesty,—all angles and calculations.

Napoleon I rather believe in awkward and simple young men—I was one myself! A black goat may give white milk. If he's a sea cartographer, he's the kind of exact fellow we want nowadays. (*Turning to the old men*) Do you seafaring men know him?

M. G., Sailor, (Unanimously) M. Vicamp? From a child, sir. All his life he's been alongshore here.

Napoleon Let me see—(*Consulting a green note-book*) I have a review at three. Send M. Vicamp up to my own baraque at five o'clock, Madame, with two of his old fishermen friends. They understand beaching boats in surf better than these navy fellows.

NAPOLÉON again tries to take snuff mechanically; again finds it wet, and snaps the box. He passes ÉLISE, who darts at him a killing glance. In going out NAPOLÉON looks fixedly at her before he vanishes—there is a breathless pause.

After he has gone all the men follow him out up the road. There are cries of 'Vive l'Empereur!' in the distance. ÉLISE and NAN look at each other with a look of overwhelming significance. They sigh deeply.

Nan He has been here, and he's sat on that chair!

Élise Where in the world is Geoffrey?

Nan (*Dusting the chair carefully*) It must never be used again! What a mercy Master Geoffrey wasn't here! I was afraid he might be dragged into this waste of war.

Élise What greater honour could befall Geoffrey than to be wasted so? D'you think I am likely to betray that his father is English?

Nan No, my dear, you were in love with him yourself once.

Élise Fal, lal, la! Never cared a rap for him!

WICKHAM enters.

Élise Nannette, let me tell the news! Geoffrey, why did you go?

Wickham Your friend the General came back and beckoned me, —something amiss. He has been suddenly ordered away; begged me to give you his last messages.

Élise Gone—with not a word to me?

Wickham All his devotion!

Élise No more than that? Ah, we shall have reams of explanation by the next courier! I am sick to death of these orders and counter-orders to marionettes.

Wickham (*With gentle hesitation*) Boulogne is so full of gaieties, *Élise*, that I hardly like to suggest—

Élise That my existence is futile. Yet one must exist.

Wickham I suppose you'll be storming London next? Yet—

Élise Yet what?

Wickham Why not come to shine on us in Kent? 'Bid her come,' says my mother, 'when she turns to us, and *wants* to come.' There's a farm-house—a maze of old apple-trees—and there's my mother.

Élise Ah, your mother! She's the page at which the book opens! It is women like her who take one in flank. (*Musingly*) How I should love to see her face again!

Wickham Nothing easier!

Élise No, no, I'm a Corsair of the Boulonnais—all for romance!

Wickham Is there no romance about a hearth? Let our apple-trees haunt you!—Hark ye, *Élise*, you remember Ray?

Élise (*Laughing*) That artist in crime?—My twin soul?

Wickham Ray's over here.

Élise (*Suddenly grave*) Then it *was* Ray I caught sight of at the camp theatre!

Wickham If he is caught—will you stand by him?

Élise Ray?—My word I will! . . . But they'll never catch him.

Wickham I hope not.

- Élise* And now Geoffrey, would you recognize Napoleon?
- Wickham* I gave him despatches once in Italy, in a garden. It was a night with a full freight of stars overhead. His elbows were by a guttering candle on a little broken stone table, between high bay hedges, under a great pine. It was a troubled mask, of mixed hardness and desire—eyeballs alive with threat. More will than intelligence, I thought, in the big cheekbones. But what a smile!—All boyish sweetness!
- Élise* Well, the man in the dripping cloak, who was at your elbow but now—
- Wickham* The fellow with lank hair, and voice so full of assurance?
- Élise* Napoleon.
- Wickham* Napoleon!
- Élise* Napoleon.
- Wickham* Impossible!
- Élise* More! The little man with the dripping cloak has commanded you to his presence at five o'clock this evening.
- Wickham* Commanded *me*! Why?
- Élise* With two of your old seafaring friends—to be up at his own baraque.
- Wickham* Already? *Asks for me?*
- Élise* Why do you say 'already'?
- Wickham* This is quick work!
- Élise* You enrage me! It *is* so. And what would *I* not give to look the only will in Europe straight in the eyes! But he squanders his sovran presence on my cloud-witted cousin.
- Wickham* Curious chance!
- Élise* And you stand there, stock-fish, when I tell you the one strong man takes you up!
- Wickham* (*Lightly, being reluctant fully to confide either in ÉLISE or in NAN*) And to be taken up by the one strong man, whether Devil or all Nature's dancing-master, is the very passion of the weak-kneed!

- Élise* Dolt!
- Wickham* If I must face him, I'll face him. I've met his
betters.
- Nan* Take two men with you who understand the beach.
- Élise* I see. You despise Napoleon because he wishes to
make use of you! Oh you wild shy naturalists, watchers
of the eternal order, as from another planet—
- Wickham* Don't be too hard on the handful of us, *Élise*!
- Élise* (*With intensity*) Chill tribe of idealists! What care
you for our terrible plight, in the here and now?
- Wickham* How do you know that I hadn't already settled to
pitch my soul to the devil for this interview? I meant
to sup with him, *Élise*, even before he invited me.
- Élise* You meant—!
- Wickham* I meant to sup with him. At what hour did you say
was the appointment?
- Élise* Five.
- Wickham* *Au revoir*, ladies.
- Élise* What will you do between this and five? Pray? Grow
in grace?
- Wickham* I shall, may be, put up a prayer or two.
- Élise* To whom?
- Wickham* No one.—The spirit in the midst.
- Élise* And what shall you ask for?
- Wickham* Power.
- Nan* And what are you going to do now, my son?
- Wickham* Take a stroll along the beach. The weather wants
watching, and there's a boat in the offing that has her
work cut out for her.

He goes out.

END OF ACT I.

*Twenty-four hours elapse between Act I and
Act II.*

ACT II

ACT II. SCENE I

Napoleon's Bedroom in his Baraque.

The Baraque stands high, near the Signals on the east cliff at Boulogne. The room is bare and simply furnished. There is an iron bedstead with large curtains over it, hung from a point in the ceiling by a copper gilt hook. On the bed are two mattresses of horse-hair, two very hard bolsters (one at each end), no pillows, two blankets, one of white cotton, and one wadded and quilted of plain green Florence silk. The wall-paper is pink, with a pattern in lace and an Etruscan border. The washing-jug and basin ware is of porcelain, with a golden fillet and an 'N' patterned on it. On the dressing-table, rich toilet articles.

NAPOLÉON is discovered dressing. RUSTAM MAMELOUK, his Egyptian valet, in Eastern garb, brings in his clothes from a room opposite across a passage; and lays down a spare cocked hat, black, frayed and worn.

Napoleon (To RUSTAM MAMELOUK) Send my secretary, M. Méneval, with the correspondence.

RUSTAM goes out.

MÉNEVAL enters, carrying a portfolio.

Napoleon Are they gone?

Méneval No, they're in the corridor. They don't know that your Majesty is yet returned.

Napoleon Some naval complaint, I suppose?

Méneval An urgent memorandum, with suggestions signed by three Admirals.

Napoleon If it's written, why need they wait?

Méneval In case your Majesty needs explanation on any technical point. They seemed mystified. I soothed them.

Napoleon Keep 'em mystified. Am I here to explain my view to a set of sea-lubbers? By the way, Ménéval, who is responsible for the sorry fowl on the ceiling of the next room? This is a plain soldier's hut.

Ménéval (*Shocked*) Sorry fowl, sir? It was the architect's idea of an eagle. He's very proud of it. It's hovering, with a sheaf of lightnings in its talons and its beak towards England—towards your Majesty's star of destiny.

Napoleon More like an ostrich! But all that gilding on the clouds—masses of gilt—how much did it cost?

Ménéval (*Producing the bill*) Here's the bill for the building of the Hut—eagle and gilding of clouds included—h'm, h'm, yes, fifty thousand francs. Architect pressing to be paid.

Napoleon Ah, I thought so! Why, with that gilding I could have maintained two spies in Saxony. I won't pay for the Hut at all! or it shan't be paid for until it can be paid for out of the enemy's exchequer.

Ménéval (*Making a note*) 'To be paid for only out of enemy's exchequer' . . . Which enemy's exchequer did you say, sir?

Napoleon (*Suspiciously*) Which enemy's exchequer, sir? Why, whichever enemy I conquer next, sir. (*Rapidly tossing over the correspondence*) This, this, this, throw away. This . . . let me see . . . the twenty-one day basket. This report from Villeneuve can wait—I'll sleep on it. He's a whining dog . . . Read the fashionable gossip from Paris, from Madame Thingamy.

Ménéval (*Reading to himself*) H'm—h'm, h'm . . .

Napoleon Don't miss out anything! I pay artists to be pleasant about me; I pay her to be unpleasant!

Ménéval (*Reading the letter*) 'Paris is leading an open-air life in 'town; but the leading hostesses refuse to appear in the 'public eye—and only turn a smiling profile towards 'your Majesty's State Balls. Their weapons are, absence,

‘nonchalance, and an exquisite sense of folly. The
 ‘Faubourg de St. Germain toys with its brief two months
 ‘of guarded gaieties; but they are hidden from strangers,
 ‘and from the Imperial Court. The great Mogul Ball
 ‘given by the Duchesse de Grammont; the Ruff and
 ‘Stomacher Ball given by the Comtesse de Chabrilan;
 ‘the Watteau Pastoral Concert for charity, given by the
 ‘Comtesse Renée de Béarn, allow themselves to be
 ‘glimpsed at and desired from outside; but the Imperial
 ‘Chancellor and his class’—

Napoleon
Méneval

The Imperial Chancellor and his class!

‘—are not invited. The tragedies of Corneille, ordered
 ‘by your Majesty, are not attended; and the heart of
 ‘the Faubourg de St. Germain is as usual, a fortress
 ‘closed against the Empress.’

Napoleon

Stop! ha, ha, ha! They’ll keep away from me,
 will they? The Faubourg de St. Germain! The
 Faubourg de St. Germain! (*Stamps with rage. Pause*)
 How long do insects take to change from ignoring
 to adoring? In six months the gauzy ladies, with their
 exquisite sense of proportion, will be crawling like toads
 to the Empress’s footstool! On with the correspondence!

Méneval

Here is the matter of the Boulogne College students—
 keen patriotic boys.

Napoleon

Couldn’t we draft an order forming a regiment of all
 the students of the district?

Méneval

I’ll tell Berthier, as Chief of Staff, to draft an order.

Napoleon

By the way, old Berthier positively looks tired!

Méneval

He let drop an odd remark the other day.

Napoleon

What!

Méneval

Regretting the Empire! Pining for the old free days,
 when he and you were gay subalterns together.

Napoleon

Gay? *I*, gay?

Méneval

‘Oh for those old charges over broken bridges!’ he
 said.

Napoleon

Lodi, eh?

Ménéval Yes. For him, the bugle sounding in advance always called the name of one battle.

Napoleon One battle? I know—*Arcola*, where we won by sounding them behind the Austrians. *Arcola, Arcola, Arcola!*—Diable, I'll *make* it the bugle-call! We must cheer old Berthier, raise his salt-money, marry him off well—tell him our glory is but beginning!

Ménéval He cares not a fig for glory—'Too late for all that' he says . . . Berthier loves your Majesty.

Napoleon I know. I was only jesting, you fool! The worst of Berthier is he has no ambition. And the worst of myself, well, I was born to make enemies. One can't lay out Europe in fresh flower-beds for nothing.

Ménéval There's the canal, for the better water-supply of Paris—Chaptal's idea.

Napoleon Excellent. Tell Chaptal to get five hundred men, and begin work on the following day.

Ménéval Then there's the Seine's overflow, the usual tendency to flood Paris.

Napoleon Let it wait. We drink oftener than we drown.

Ménéval Then the map-boxes.

Napoleon What map-boxes?

Ménéval Those that your Majesty ordered, to be made of acajou wood, in three compartments,—to be put on trestles for the travelling library. We're in a great quandary about the map-boxes.

Napoleon Good heavens, why?

Ménéval One of the boxes was to be reserved for English and Irish maps; but the Austrian and Saxon maps nearly fill all three. D'Albe, the cartographer, asks shall he get a fourth box made? I woke the fat little D'Albe at two in the morning to give him your instructions. He only made one meek complaint.

Napoleon That fellow's getting too independent.

Ménéval The English coast-maps, besides being few and scanty, are obsolete. The Saxon and Austrian ones by Petri are

good, though forty years old. Was it worth making a fresh box for the English maps?

Napoleon

And what did you say to D'Albe?

Méneval

That possibly your Majesty would need the English coast-maps less than the Austrian ones.

Napoleon

(*After a pause*) Ah!—That my Majesty would need those of the Kentish coast, for the flotilla and Channel, less than those for an Austrian invasion?

MÉNEVAL, alarmed, is silent.

Napoleon

How discouraging you are, dear Méneval.—Of course, with men of your piercing wits about us, we and our inmost intentions are bare; we're naked as in the day of judgement! God's eyes!—Naked as a needle! Still, spare us, humour us! Indulge the official ostrich with a little, little play, in a little, little sand!

Méneval

I do most humbly protest, your Majesty, I hadn't the ghost of a . . .

Napoleon

Perhaps my Majesty will need the English maps less? I thought we had here over ninety-three thousand men, along twenty miles of coast, ready to be launched from new-dug harbours against England? How long did our second rehearsal, of embarking the entire expedition, take to finish yesterday?

Méneval

During six tides, sir.

Napoleon

Ah, not six seconds, just a wave of my hand, like that?

Méneval

No, six tides.

Napoleon

Ah then, I totter back to sanity! Out with it! You want to know which I'm going to strike, Britain or Austria?

Méneval

I declare I was absolutely . . .

Napoleon

But how natural! Your eye ranges east and west, impatient to settle the fate of Europe. I should have consulted you! Is this crossing practicable? England's a heavy thought!—The richer prey; while Austria's riper,—more accessible. And Austria, like you, is

impatient—England is impatient—to know how much gold they will have to squander, keeping armies afoot.

Méneval
Napoleon

Sire . . . (*Sbrugging his shoulders helplessly.*)

Well, my dear Méneval, you're perfectly right, things are in the balance! A fly alighting, a hair, a feather, would tilt it one way or t'other. (*Pause*) One way or t'other the eagle will come down from the ceiling. I fear I can't quite satisfy any of the three of you. Still, you can give to Austria, and to England, invaluable advice! Let 'em take, each of them, a daisy—Oh, a paper daisy will do!—Pluck it, each of them, with the trembling hand of a Marguerite in anguish, petal by petal—He loves me, he loves me not—yes, no, yes, no—up to the last petal's most anxious flutter, eh? Just so, dear Méneval, Austria and England will arrive at an idea (though I'm afraid only an approximate idea) as to which empire I am going to invade! . . . (*Pause*) And then, what a comfort, eh? You'll be able to pay for my guilt clouds!

Méneval
Napoleon
Méneval

Believe me, your Majesty, I am heart-broken . . .

My dear ass!—On with the correspondence.

(*Shakily*) Then there's the matter of the Boulogne College students—(*Sobs*).

Napoleon
Méneval

Nonsense!

The Boulogne College students (*Gulps*)—The Boulogne College students—(*Pulling himself together*) They're keen, patriotic . . . (*stops*)

Napoleon

(*Kindly*) No, we've dealt with all that. By the way, *this* I'll tell you: you won't have long to wait: the eagle will be down from the ceiling in a week.

Méneval
Napoleon
Méneval

A week!

Within a week.

Well, your Majesty's war-dogs are always in good fettle.

Napoleon

Would to God they were! Why, look at Caulaincourt and Madame de Canisy! Even the faithful Duroc has

an affair with La Bigottini; Berthier's making an idiot of himself over Mademoiselle Visconti; Chaptal, my gun-powder and beetroot-sugar man, instead of attending to canals, is neglecting them for an opera-dancer. Finally, when I moved Dubois from Dijon I find him *here* without orders, on the same tack. It's no good, they want to live soft. Nothing will cure them but the bivouac. My men were born round the bivouac—'Sdeath! I'll keep 'em there till they die!

Enter RUSTAM the valet.

Valet (To MÉNEVAL) If you please, Monsieur, a lady to see the Emperor.

Méneval Her name?

Valet She will not give her name. She is well-bred, well-dressed.

Méneval But she has no appointment. How old is she? (*Aside*) Can it possibly be Mademoiselle George of the Opera?

NAPOLÉON *wheels round indignantly, and glares at MÉNEVAL.*

Méneval No, she wouldn't come unless sent for. Will you see her, Sire?

Napoleon Does she bring her yellow ticket with her? Who let the cursed baggage past?

Valet The naval officers in the passage gave her their turn.

Napoleon Ah! Didn't I say so? They're trying to watch her effect on me! Show the woman in! I'll teach the grinning fools a lesson!

ACT II. SCENE II

A Corridor in the Baraque.

*It is the wall of the Corridor outside NAPOLEON'S bedroom.
The corridor leads on the right into the unseen Council Chamber.*

The ADMIRALS can see through the door into the Council Chamber.

1st Admiral She's gone on ahead of us. There's the valet crossing the passage with his master's clothes.

2nd Admiral How the master chills me to the marrow! The mere wash of his bows pushes one off, like that.

3rd Admiral Think of the *way* he's got to keep on!—through ice and fire.

2nd Admiral Give him sea-room then. Pay out rope to his vanity. A coil o' rope is what it'll come to.

3rd Admiral Vanity? Be just. Hasn't he earned a right to vanity?

2nd Admiral Look at the coquetry of riding in the mass of a brilliant staff, in his shabby coat without a star, and a battered old green hat! Why the hell can't he wear a clean uniform with braid, like the rest of us, and have done with it? No, he must shine by not shining.

1st Admiral Yes, and look here, how he takes care to date all his notes to me, 2 a.m. or 1.45 a.m.! He must impress one with his night-industry, eh?

3rd Admiral Yes, but I know as a fact, he *was* up in the saddle at 2.45 a.m. He must be made of cast-iron merely to stand it.

1st Admiral Appearances, appearances, appearances, my dear fellow!

2nd Admiral I wonder where the devil he's putting in an appearance now.—Popping up here, there, and everywhere, just to create an impression!

3rd Admiral Never mind, in one thing, we're to the windward of

him. Think of his pitiful life among your lawyers, police, and politicians—with a bomb under his carriage to the Opera! After all, we have free salt water, and the finest of company.

The 1ST and 2ND ADMIRALS laugh and nod.

1st Admiral I can understand a man *wholly* a soldier—wholly a bourgeois—wholly an artist—or wholly a thief. But this prismatic polygon of a fellow wants to sparkle all round. The gunner claims to be a lawyer—takes credit for the Code Napoléon, which was really got ready by the Directorate.

3rd Admiral Damn it all, gentlemen, he did butt into the legal discussions. He found the Code cut and dried, sleeping on official shelves. 'Lazarus, come forth!' he said, and issued the Code. Let him brand his 'N' on it if he likes.

1st Admiral No, no. When the last sign-post comes, where the roads fork, and he leaves his own sacred path to follow the path of France, *then* I'll believe in him! But until then, observe what he calls his passion for organization!

3rd Admiral What's that?

2nd Admiral Shifting an opponent he fears, from a post in which he's a life-long expert, to another post in which he's an infant, and has to begin again at A B C. That's how he paralyses! Brand his 'N' on that!

3rd Admiral You're too hard on him. He's the elect of France!—why should we know what he's after? No, but in one thing I'm with you fellows. His ignorance of the sea *is* terrible. Did you see his order about rounding the Fort de Croy?

1st Admiral And his notion of manœuvres in a tideway!

3rd Admiral That's why I'm here to-day. Since poor Bruix died, there's no one to stand up to him. He comes to us who've been cradled in service on these waters, and tells us——

2nd Admiral Why, there *is* Napoleon, look!—through the glass door.

- 3rd Admiral That's the Council Chamber. He's receiving the lady!
 2nd Admiral She's opened all her batteries.
 3rd Admiral No use!
 2nd Admiral What is she saying?
 1st Admiral She's trying another tack!
 3rd Admiral She's making no headway.
 2nd Admiral Yes, she is—look at that!
 1st Admiral I don't know—Watch him! Watch him! Play-acting!
 3rd Admiral I think she's carried it.
 2nd Admiral Here comes the private secretary!

Enter MÉNEVAL.

- Méneval Is it possible that you three gentlemen have been kept waiting? I gave your memorandum in some time ago.
 1st Admiral Oh it's nothing—a few remarks we scribbled down. No hurry. I dare say he's read it, and half a dozen others by this.
 Méneval You have some criticisms to make on the flotilla and crossing?
 3rd Admiral Mere suggestion. We don't press it if he's busy.
 Méneval Could you give me the gist of it?
 1st Admiral His Majesty once had the flotilla out manœuvring against poor Bruix's orders, you remember? It was blowing up for wildish weather.
 Méneval Well?
 1st Admiral D'you remember the beach next morning? Strewn with poor fellows' corpses . . .
 3rd Admiral The gist of it is, weather's everything! If we're to keep two or three thousand boats together, *we* and no soldier, must choose the day.
 Méneval Then tell him so. Plain speaking's his staff of life.
 1st Admiral Is it?
 3rd Admiral Remember Bruix—never forgiven.
 Méneval He forgives the opposer, even when the expert's proved utterly wrong!

1st Admiral But does he forgive, when the expert's proved right?

Ménéval Why, he's the very image of docility! His complaint to me is that he has to do his own criticism. 'Tear to pieces for me this padded, official lingo!' he says. I'll go and see if he's ready. (*Going.*)

2nd Admiral (*Laughing*) Five minutes, and I see the image of docility chasing us round the table!

ACT II. SCENE III

The Council Chamber in NAPOLEON'S Baraque.

The Council Chamber at the end of NAPOLEON'S Baraque faces the sea. The room is semicircular; a half circle of windows looking over the Channel. The scene is beheld from the bay of these windows. The walls are papered in light grey silvery paper. There is a large map of the Channel on the back wall; on the ceiling are gilt clouds and an eagle holding a sheaf of lightnings and guided towards England by a star—the Emperor's star of destiny.

A big telescope stands in a curve of the bow windows, facing the Channel and the spectators. There are three doors in the hinder wall: one small one to the left leading into NAPOLEON'S bedroom; in the middle, folding doors, lofty, wide and open—looking down the passage where the Admirals have been waiting and can still be seen. The third door, to the right, matches the first, and leads into the Emperor's clothes-room.

On a large oval table covered with green fringed cloth, and strewn with goose-quill pens of all sizes, are a sandbox and six silver candlesticks.

NAPOLEON is sitting at the end of the table, in a green morocco arm-chair—the only chair. He is reading the 'Moniteur' newspaper in such a manner that he can be watched through the glass doors by the NAVAL OFFICERS down the passage.

ÉLISE enters through the wide central doors. She makes a quick step or two forward towards NAPOLEON; stops with dismay, seeing him reading; and looking round, perceives that an USHER, who has shown her

in, remains; next, sees all the sweep of lighted windows; next, the Officers down the passage. All is visible and exposed. She had hoped for more privacy. She makes a bold plunge and advances to the end of the table, facing NAPOLEON.

Élise (Curtsying deeply) I push past the archangels, and make straight for omnipotence . . .

Napoleon (Not looking up) Your name, Mademoiselle?

Élise I was that poor player who addressed you, as the Goddess Bononia, last night, at the camp-theatre . . .

Napoleon Ah! (Still reads.)

Élise And before that I met and heard you—O what it meant to me—in the tavern!

NAPOLEON still reads. Throughout the interview NAPOLEON, intending that the Admirals shall watch him, meets the appeals of ÉLISE, first on one side of the table, and then on the other, by shifting his attitude and his newspaper.

I have an introduction to you from an ambassador—but I haven't brought it—For as you went out through the tavern-door . . . it seemed that . . . well, what can one say?

Napoleon Proceed.

Élise (Goes to the side of the table. Napoleon does not look up) That I might regard your Majesty as a . . . friend. You have thrown an idle compliment to the actress. You were not wholly displeased with the woman . . . Well . . . I am here!

NAPOLEON shifts his paper to one side. ÉLISE retires to the foot of the table.

Napoleon Anything else?

Élise One word. I have two cousins here. To the elder your Majesty granted an interview yesterday. The man's unusual—he'll say nothing of himself—he's like a deep-sea sounding-line, no end of him hanging out of sight.

Don't be put off by that. He has devoted twelve years to mapping the Channel. To France his maps would be invaluable.

Napoleon I am obliged for your suggestion, ma'am. Anything else?

Élise You have dismissed my friend, General Dubois, God knows whither—ruined probably . . . but it was your hand that did it.

Napoleon Go on!

Élise We know that you are inwardly humane. They say, 'Cross your ambitions, and you are deaf to mercy!' . . .

Napoleon Deaf as the tomb!

Élise Deaf as the tomb! Ah! I know better, Sire! It was I who forced Dubois to come here, to tell me of his marriage. He does not cross your ambitions. The fault was mine. Tell me how this man Dubois may retrieve himself, and win your favour.

Napoleon What?

Élise Take me, and pardon him! Forgive my boldness!—It was your glance that set me on and inspirited me. Let me save this man's career for France; let me save it for you! His ruin can't be clenched past retrieval. I have but a minute to speak in—I shall sink back again into the crowd, never fear—nameless and defenceless—for who can suddenly protect any generous woman against herself? But you yourself are the man I have worshipped! Take me, and use me as you will, so that the service be dangerous!

Napoleon (*After a pause*) Are these the only impulses you have, in coming to see me, ma'am?

Élise Impulses! Lord, I have a parliament of impulses, that can't hear themselves speak! All my life I have been seeking the heroic Take me up as a sword and use me! Has a woman's mind no edge?

Napoleon Is this your business?

Élise (Changing her position to the other side of the table)
No, no, much else But if my presence irks your Majesty—(She smiles inquiringly)

Napoleon Dubois has been disgraced for a fault.

Élise Who is not faulty? We recognize men as real by their faults.

Napoleon The relevancy of your remarks escapes me, ma'am.

Élise Why did you look at me so poignantly then; and refuse to look at me now? Why do you direct the conversation like a manœuvre? No matter what warmth of heart we fling at your feet! Are we just the cold statistics out of which you build your plans?

Napoleon If in war-time people were more than statistics to me, ma'am, the solidest brain could not stand it. I cannot have my hours invaded by—interesting affairs of the heart.

Élise O my heart—poor heart—can take care of itself!

Napoleon Are you married, Madame?

Élise It's a stage we poor women have to go through.

Napoleon I should advise you to renew your friendship with General Dubois.

Élise Who has been provided with one of the heiresses of France, as with a kind of top-dressing for light soil.

Napoleon Perhaps, perhaps! He'll not marry till peace is signed. Meantime—

Élise I've been hungry for heroism.—Well, I must swallow my hunger!

Napoleon Is there anything else?

Élise Yes, one thing important to you. (She hesitates) My other cousin . . . a younger brother of the first . . . whom I've known since we climbed apple-trees together . . .

Napoleon Well?

Élise I hardly like to trouble you with it—but the boy has got into a scrape—

Napoleon What for?

Élise Folly—talking of the 'writing on a wall against the tyrant', or prattle of that kind.

Napoleon

No more?

Élise

Well, if he had drunk more wine no doubt he would have said more.

Napoleon

The 'writing on a wall against the tyrant' comes in by every courier. Oblige me by communicating the matter to the General commanding the Fourth Army Corps, General Soult. His head-quarters are outside.

Élise

How well I know those head-quarters! Unhappily I have reason to suspect the boy's been employed by a member of your own Head-quarter Staff!

Napoleon

Pish!

Élise

Ah! You accept no service even from the humblest of your admirers?

Napoleon

Yes, service through the ordinary official channels. But with all admiration I can dispense.

Élise

You choose to remain in ignorance?

Napoleon

In some dangerous places there are few things more valuable than ignorance, ma'am.

Élise

I see. I am a thing, wicked, stupid and vain, as the swans you play with outside?

Napoleon

I distrust *superior* women, Madame.

Élise

What do you know of me?—Nothing. What are you willing to know?—Nothing.

Napoleon

I like women to confine themselves to the purposes for which they were created!

Élise

(*Rising*) What! The milky purposes? But I am a woman who has nursed your wounded, and sat all night on the battle-field beside your dying—when the roundshot came whooping overhead.

Napoleon

Indeed!

Élise

Do I come to pay court to Caesar? Why, I've seen writing on the wall myself! One of those shot fell on the convent we had turned into a hospital. When I got back to my hospital from the field, I found it empty—all the wounded, helpless and legless, had risen from their beds and fled. Not a sign of them! But

low down, low down, near the floor, all down the white walls of the corridor, there were red finger-marks, where the crawlers had dragged themselves away. That was writing on the wall some could understand! —But what are the wounded of the world to you!

NAPOLEON *smiles.*

Napoleon I regret, Madame, that my time is limited, and my patience human.

Élise (*With scornfulness*) Human, no! I came here to ask a favour on behalf of a boy—Adieu, Sire! You who are deaf as the tomb, and, may be, as barren; who never will look into the eyes of love—Good-bye! . . . (*She curtsies profoundly*) There are some wounds which are ineffaceable, and yet are to be prized, infinitely prized. This interview with your Majesty will always, for me, be one of them!

She sweeps out.

As ÉLISE goes out, she is heard to mutter something.

Napoleon (*To an USHER*) What did the alluring lady say as she went out?

Usher She said, 'He never shall fall into *those* hands!'

Napoleon (*Pacing up and down*) Take her address. So much temperament to deploy—might be damned useful.

MÉNEVAL *enters, and admits the ADMIRALS.*

The USHER goes out.

Napoleon Sorry to have kept you waiting, gentlemen. Inside that door (*indicating the door to the right*) is the man whose paper on Channel tides you recommended to me last year. Personally I hate making changes, being bred in the artillery where they're too expensive, but a coast-survey we must have.

2nd Admiral Yes. A meridian kept in every town, and every fall of cliff, and loss of shore, registered.

Napoleon He tells me that, thanks to wind and sea and the

neglect of the house of France, we've lost a harbour here to match the roads at Dover!—Two long capes used to run out—that are now sand-shoals, or sand-dunes blowing inland over our fields of clover. Méneval, the Admirals would like to hear M. Vicamp's observations on their paper.

Admirals Much honoured.

MÉNEVAL admits WICKHAM, who enters with a cheerful gait and steady eyes.

Napoleon Méneval, you can leave us.

MÉNEVAL goes out.

Napoleon Vicamp, you represent science; enlighten us on the Admirals' note.

Wickham I know nothing of Armadas. Does your Majesty seriously want a layman's opinion?

3rd Admiral (*Interrupting*) On the tides, sir.

Napoleon Given good weather, are the tides here so grave a matter?

Wickham I take it you must cross orderly,—all your eight squadrons—division by division; each boat of the two thousand four hundred following its flag-boat?

Napoleon Yes.

Wickham Well, your main difficulties would be two:—The tide's unpunctuality; and the strangeness of the current here.

Napoleon Can you explain?

Wickham You would have to cross on a flood-tide up Channel. But it is never punctual. It seems all vagary—comes swirling, ragged, chaotic—sometimes kept back for hours by strong winds, or some ground-swell in the Atlantic hanging on its skirts. Sometimes it will make twice as fast as at others. It streams up Channel at three knots an hour—passes Dover for five hours—halts eight minutes—then for seven hours sinks back down Channel.

Napoleon Halts eight minutes, you say?

- Wickham* Yes.
- Napoleon* Why not aim at landing in those eight minutes of slack-water?
- Wickham* (*Smiling*) O, there's never slack-water at Dover! For there the streams from North Sea and Channel meet. They churn you always a wild reel—a witch's dance!
- Napoleon* Well, and what of the currents here, you spoke of?
- Wickham* What's the *shape* of the flood your boats will have to cross on? You will guess it flows fastest mid-stream? The middle water *ahead* of the water inshore?
- Napoleon* Naturally.
- Wickham* Here at Boulogne it is never so. The head of the main Channel-stream becomes concave—breaks into indrafts, eddies, and races,—takes the shape of the sweep of coast it's gone past.—
- Napoleon* And the result?
- Wickham* Every strip of shore has its pilot's rule of thumb, its pilot's secret:—of which I find here (*tapping the ADMIRALS' note*) no mention.
- Napoleon* What's the rule of thumb here at Boulogne?
- Wickham* That here the flood comes first alongshore, and the mid-stream, out at sea, much later. For instance, that little sloop (*pointing forward, out of the window*) far outside the Baas sandbank will swing round with the flood three-quarters of an hour *later* than the boats in alongshore; not, as one would have expected, before them.
- Napoleon* And the pilot's local secret?
- Wickham* (*Glancing at the ADMIRALS*)—Familiar no doubt to these gentlemen—
- Admirals* Yes: but pray explain—
- Wickham* Is the rate of change as one goes seaward.—For every mile you sail out to sea, the flood-tide comes five minutes *later*. So your boats must allow for that slowing curve of delay; otherwise they'll be thrown into confusion.
- 1st Admiral* (*Awkwardly*) You see, Sire?

3rd Admiral And suppose there's not wind enough to sail a feather?
Napoleon (To ADMIRALS, *sternly*) Ay, but what of the pilot's secret that you left out? What allowance did you make for the sagging of the current midstream? From that it follows we must change the order of our going, and let the fastest boats start second.

2nd Admiral I agree.

Napoleon (To ADMIRALS) Then why leave me to discover it from an outsider? And this paper of yours—beside the mark! After a year's maundering, we know all about the gale of St. Laurence that blows in mid-August; and that waves are made of water. Don't stand dazed like fawns, gentlemen! Be less swayed by terror at the sight of water! Criticisms on the embarkation I should have welcomed. *You* deal with the strategy of an invasion by flotilla. I am much obliged, but *I* can furnish all the strategy required.

1st Admiral We're aware that your Majesty called us 'cautious imbeciles'

Napoleon Did I say 'cautious'?

3rd Admiral But if we have to answer for the crossing, we must lay before you its dangers. And if your Majesty hates opposition we can't help it.

Napoleon Dislike you because you oppose me? I love my opposers! I need them to feel invincible. My dislike is for the feckless and the stagnant who support me and fail me. Harkye, look through this telescope—no, with the naked eye—see the glitter on the roofs of Dover! One stride across the ditch, and the thing's done. We've been stripped of our fishing fleets long enough. And remember where we stand. Under the floor of this hut, and jutting up—look!—into my very garden, are old brick bastions. What are they? Fragments of the Odre Tower:—the 'Tower at the Edge'—the Roman lighthouse, with a caged lantern at its top—an octagonal tower to light the straits. Here was the

Roman base, for all invasions of Britain. And what a gang of proud ghosts—the Emperors that sailed from under the shadow of these cliffs! Caesar, Claudius, Hadrian, Antoninus, Constantius, Constantine! Shall we halt, where they passed over? Where their silver eagles ran up those chalk beaches, shall my golden eagles fail? One night, six centuries later, in the darkness above our heads, from the iron basket on the top of Caligula's lighthouse, there shot out a *new* blaze. An old man climbed the ruined stages of the Tower and lit the cresset with his big and bony hands. They say the words that really rule us, we never utter! It's a lie, gentlemen! One word governs me. It is the name of that old man—Charlemagne! He bequeathed us the new torch against the northern pirates. And now, after another thousand years, he kindles it again. He sets inside the iron cage another flame—that shall feed upon the storms that would extinguish it. He sets my soul within the cage! No need to stamp my foot upon this pavement to summon those dead Emperors. They live and move within me! I shine from those windows across the strait. The future of France lies across that water—We'll have a battle of Salamis in the North Sea.

Pause.

Napoleon (To the ADMIRALS) You can go. (To WICKHAM) Stay you.

ADMIRALS go out.

MÉNEVAL enters, and a SERVANT.

Napoleon (To SERVANT) Bring a tray, I'll dine here.

(To WICKHAM) You see the gear I have to work with? Ah! What do they know of a people cracking its shell? (*Pause*) Whom have we in the next room?

Wickham Fishermen Captains turned privateersmen, sir.

Napoleon Ah yes, I forgot—your friends.

A noise is heard outside.

Napoleon (To MÉNEVAL) What noise is that?

Méneval Marine-Guards have arrived with a prisoner.
Napoleon I cannot have these rows within earshot.

MÉNEVAL goes out.

Wickham (*To WICKHAM*) Tell me how you think they took it?
Napoleon Took your onslaught, sir?

Yes. Were they convinced, or obstinate? It's all one to me, but how did the effect strike you?

Wickham I think they were dumbfounded——

Napoleon That's the essential! Electrify them! Is a man a rock in the bed of a torrent—never to be transformed?

Wickham No, no, no.

Napoleon What did you think of their paper?

Wickham Quite competent, sir.

Napoleon Those fools competent?

NAPOLEON has designedly asked for the ADMIRALS' memorandum of criticism in order that they should set out proofs of their own imbecility in plain black and white.

Wickham But I agreed with them.

Napoleon Then what did you think of my speech yourself?

Wickham A brave performance, sir.

Napoleon My lighthouse left you cold?

Wickham The speech, and the speaker, were dark to me.

Napoleon Why?

Wickham How make good your vaunt? Why promise what you cannot perform?

NAPOLEON is surprised. He has opened more of his mind to WICKHAM as to an honest stranger; an unofficial nobody from whom nothing is to be feared. He is still undecided as to which invasion—that of England or Austria—he shall adopt. To the main problems set him by the Fates it is his fashion, up to the last moment, to prepare two answers; and to think out both ways to

the end. Accordingly in the present case he forces his instrumental men, both of navy and army, to the full pitch of expectation. This method requires serious comedy. He has till now been wholly serious, except as to the fixity of his intentions, which to the flotilla leaders must be made to appear single, whereas they are alternative.

- Napoleon* Vicamp, Mr. Deep-sea-sounding-line, you're a masterpiece! We'll decree you a golden statue for candour—delightful candour! You fancied I was in earnest?
- Wickham* Ay, in mad earnest.
- Napoleon* In mad earnest? Ah! My resources in earnestness are considerable. But tell me why, up till now, you thought I was in play?
- Wickham* Because whichever course you took, I knew the course against England to be the one course debarred.
- Napoleon* All these new-dug ports,—massings of vessels—and so on?
- Wickham* A demonstration—a sea fairy-tale.
- Napoleon* You knew that?
- Wickham* Better than fifty Admirals! . . . I mean—
- Napoleon* Don't apologize! You were certain, till now. And the ground of your certainty?
- Wickham* (*Smiling*) My own studies! But, if your Majesty has no further commands, may I withdraw?
- Napoleon* No. On this much hangs. How knew you this?
- Wickham* You had naught sure to go by. The charts needed for such a move by sea no ministry in the world possesses. They don't exist.
- Napoleon* We have maps—charts—Caffarelli's . . .
- Wickham* Your Majesty must know better than I that not one map here of the English shore is worth a rush. Take the rock-ledges just awash off Folkestone, the Molehead, Cockledge; the Boulder Bank off Rye—unmarked. Then many of the beaches are shifting beaches.

- Napoleon* Are you sure of that?
- Wickham* Why, sir, I have spent my life swinging the lead up and down Channel to find it out. The only fresh trustworthy charts are my own. And they, being single-handed work, are fragmentary.
- Napoleon* What have you finished?
- Wickham* The stretch of coast opposite.
- Napoleon* And your charts—where are they?
- Wickham* In my lockers, on yonder boat.
- Napoleon* The boat you work on? By the way, why did you not run for harbour, and bring her in to Boulogne?
- Wickham* Until I was on some little footing with your Majesty? I feared, because of her English rig, for my manuscripts—running between the English blockade and the coast-guns.
- Napoleon* After all, I had invited you. Well, and with your flawless maps, is landing in England practicable?
- Wickham* Nothing's impossible. Still, were there here a live commander; who could forget—(*Pauses*)
- Napoleon* Forget what?
- Wickham* Well—that he had crossed the Alps, won seventy battles, conquered fifty provinces, taken a thousand standards, disarmed Sardinian kings, humbled Popes and Emperors, and made of Italy a kingdom:—forget, in fact, every feat in the blazon of a Charlemagne—
- Napoleon* Well?
- Wickham* And who could remember only a lean young man, one of Plutarch's men, who once lifted us, his shoeless regiments, in spite of bare and bleeding feet, past a wagon-load of new boots on the road to Montenotte—
- Napoleon* Ah, those boots! You served in Italy?
- Wickham* As a volunteer.
- Napoleon* I remember your face. Suppose your young captain here.
- Wickham* I say he would not give a jot for my evidence, though fresh from the English shore—nor even for that of the men in the next room . . .

- Napoleon* I guess your riddle.
Wickham Then, sir, you can word the answer.
- Long pause.*
- Napoleon* By God! Superb!
Wickham In your place—
Napoleon He would use his own eyes!
Wickham As he had done in Italy.
Napoleon He would steal across at night on your boat, the safer
for her English rig—
Wickham And beforehand look so narrowly into the coast
already surveyed—
Napoleon The closer the clearer.
Wickham —as to need no opinion from me.
Napoleon Saperlotte! I'll do it! You hesitate?
Wickham Not I.
Napoleon Call your friends in.
- WICKHAM opens the right-hand door, and calls
in the CAPTAINS.*
- Wickham* (*Introducing them*) Bucaille, Duchenne, Broquart.
Napoleon Men, I know you each by name. My army is ready.
My long nets, like yours, are spread along these cliffs.
But my naval staff doesn't know everything. I con-
sult you. We can't do without the sea, can we, Bucaille?
- Bucaille* It can do without us, sir.
Napoleon Yet it feeds you. How many British prizes have you
taken?
Bucaille A hundred and seventy, sir.
Napoleon Good. (*To DUCHENNE*) How many times have you
given the English hulks the slip?
Duchenne Seven times.
Napoleon I thought so. (*To BROQUART*) He must have been
born on a Dutch eel-sloop?—They're pretty well at
home on the sea.
Broquart God alone's at home there, sir.
Napoleon Harkye! I'm going to trust you. I want to inspect
the landing-places for myself, across the water—myself

to reconnoitre in person, for a night or two, on the English coast. Can it be done?

Broquart

My senses!

Napoleon

What say you, Duchenne?

Duchenne

Hum!

Napoleon

And you? (*To BUCAILLE.*)

Bucaille

(*After long pondering*) Happen, yes. Happen, it might, on one of these low-built lugger-rigged—

Napoleon

(*To BROQUART*) When's the best time for setting out?

Broquart

An hour before high-tide.

Napoleon

(*To DUCHENNE*) You look glum, Duchenne?

Duchenne

Well, there's sheep now hanging from my roof, taken off the Kentish Downs. But it's one thing for us to risk our old hides for a cask of gin; another to risk your Majesty.

Napoleon

You go for a cask of gin, and not for me? Come. Will you escort me across under this gentleman's command, on his sloop?

All

Ay.

Napoleon

We'll cross *to-morrow night*, men. Thanks. Adieu.

The CAPTAINS go out.

Napoleon

(*To WICKHAM*) I'll come aboard your boat to-morrow. Is it clear, *to-morrow night*, four miles out, at ten?

Wickham

Agreed, and more than agreed. That is—if your Majesty desires it.

Napoleon

(*Changing his manner to joviality*) Do you know I planned this escapade in Egypt, in days when my pulses ran like the Rhone? Some snuff, Vicamp! England baulks me from the east—she shuts me from the rising sun! (*Humming a well-known air*) 'She was such a charming child, she was such a *charming* child!' But she was, and is, an incurably stupid child!—Don't you think so?

Wickham

No, Sir.

Napoleon

Why not?

Wickham

At least she's invented the finest story in the world.

Napoleon

What is it?

Wickham Her own.

Napoleon Ha!

Wickham Her sons may be wily as the many-wandered Ulysses. But isn't she herself spinning the Odyssey of Europe?

Napoleon We'll talk of that on board.

Wickham And France the new Iliad?

MÉNEVAL enters, perturbed.

Méneval Some injury is reported to the main near battery, sir.

Napoleon The monster battery? What injury? Get my hat—

I'll ride down and see. (*To WICKHAM*) Wait here. I shall be back in a few minutes.

NAPOLEON goes out hurriedly, accompanied by MÉNEVAL.

WICKHAM is alone in the Council Chamber.

Wickham (*Alone*) He's coming! The incredible's within an ace, within an ace! Half-way up my cliff—rocks below! Have I climbed up here in a dream? Why am I not mad with joy? Numb, rather—numb. But after all I am serving—and I shall be alone with what I asked for.

The Mamelouk servant, RUSTAM, who eyes WICKHAM curiously, enters,—puts some pens on the table—and without remark goes out.

MÉNEVAL re-enters rapidly.

Méneval A young man's been found hiding under a hedge at Wimille. The crowd have been shaking him. They think he has damaged one of the guns. His Majesty met the prisoner, and ordered him to be brought here. Unhappily, I don't know English. (*To USHER*) Bring the man in.

The MARINE-GUARD (of Act I, Scene II) enters with RAYMOND, who is torn, sweaty, and breathless. He does not recognize WICKHAM, whose recognition of him is hardly perceptible.

Wickham (*To MÉNEVAL*) May I ask him some questions in English?

Méneval
Wickham

Certainly, if you know any.
Prisoner.

RAYMOND raises his head, but is too exhausted to speak. He recognizes his brother. The following dialogue is conducted in a level and calm tone.

Wickham

My boy, we can speak in English. What have you done?

Raymond
Wickham

(*Panting*) Spiked one of the great guns.
Were you discovered?

Raymond
Wickham

No. Arrested on suspicion.
Then kith and kin to the rescue.

Raymond
Wickham

I shall be shot.
Not so fast. There's not one guard on the prison-barges that doesn't sell instruments for escape. *Élise* or I will arrange with your guard to-night.

Raymond
Wickham

To-night?
This very night.

Raymond
Wickham

I may be imprisoned in a hut up here.
They are mud-walled. You shall have a knife. One way or another, out you shall come.

Méneval
Wickham

What does he say?
Washed ashore in a gale.

Méneval
Wickham

Strong meat, that!
(*To RAYMOND*) You remember the rope you left on the cliff?

Raymond
Wickham

Yes.
I shall be waiting beneath it on the beach to-night. Join me below.

Raymond
Wickham

To-night? It seems hopeless.
Our sloop's not far out. I'll get a boat, or planks. Failing them, harkye, we'll make a swim of it!

Raymond
Wickham

Swim of it?
What's a four-mile swim?

Raymond

I'll try. (*Pause*) Oh heavens! Your plan—your great plan! All by my folly ruined.

Wickham What of it? Others will succeed.

Méneval What does he say?

Wickham He was arrested at Wimille while gathering herbs.

An USHER hands in a pair of field-glasses.

MÉNEVAL takes them.

Méneval (*Holding up the glasses*) Herbs? Viewing herbs through these?

NAPOLEON re-enters hastily.

Napoleon The gun's spiked. Where's the fellow? Ah!

Méneval Monsieur Vicamp has cross-examined him.

Napoleon In English? There Monsieur Vicamp has the advantage of me.

Méneval He says he appears innocent.

Napoleon He may be innocent. But if proved guilty, Monsieur Vicamp will agree with me that he must be blown from one of the guns of the battery. (*To MÉNEVAL*) Send the man to the head-quarters of the second division. These uncountable spies must be stopped.

RAYMOND goes out with his guard.

MÉNEVAL follows.

(*With a steady glance at WICKHAM; calling MÉNEVAL back*) Send after to say that he's to be made to speak; and if he won't speak, his thumbs to be squeezed in the hammer of a musket until he does speak.

During this colloquy NAPOLEON, watching WICKHAM, sees the slight contraction of a cheek.

MÉNEVAL goes out after making a note.

Napoleon (*Changing his tone to good humour*) Fortunate for the prisoner that you could speak English, Vicamp. But I don't think I need keep you now. I shall rely on your keeping our rendezvous at sea, at ten o'clock to-morrow, eh?

Wickham (*Bows*) To-morrow night. The rendezvous at sea.

Napoleon (*Smiling*) Provided, of course, you have no prior engagement!

WICKHAM goes out, pausing on his way, and somewhat agitated.

NAPOLEON looks steadily after him, and then at the window.

Napoleon (Musingly) He winced. (He touches a bell.)

MÉNEVAL enters.

Méneval Sire?

Napoleon

The Captain of the Port is at the Admirals' hut. Send him here; also my valet, Rustam.

MÉNEVAL goes out.

NAPOLEON goes to the telescope, and looks out to sea.

RUSTAM, the valet, enters.

Napoleon

Prepare for my absence at sea for a week. The yellow leather trunk, cloaks, map-cases.

RUSTAM goes out.

NAPOLEON looks through the telescope.

The CAPTAIN of the Port enters.

Napoleon

(Without looking round) Is that the Captain of the Port? Do you see that small ship, four miles out? What is she, eh?

Captain

She sometimes helps the escape of French prisoners, sir.

Napoleon

She is in enemy hands; perhaps helping the escape of English prisoners.

Captain

Is it possible?

Napoleon

We'll forestall them. Take a pinnace and a couple of guns, and board her before night-fall.

Captain

To-night, sir?

Napoleon

Now! now! now!—before eight o'clock! And I'll come aboard her myself at ten to-night, in a common despatch-boat.

The CAPTAIN is going out.

Captain

(Pausing) There's a touch of chill in the southerly wind—maybe it's coming in a bit foggy, sir.

Napoleon

Foggy? Well, you can get out sweeps, I suppose?

Captain We shall await your Majesty on board that boat. (*He goes out.*)

NAPOLEON, hidden from the door by a screen, leans against one of the windows in a thoughtful attitude.

RUSTAM enters and lights the six candles on the table. Then, thinking the room empty, he leans over his master's chair, and makes a despairing gesture of compassion, unseen by NAPOLEON.

NAPOLEON steps out from behind the screen.

Rustam May even Rustam speak a word? But no!

Napoleon Speak.

Rustam I suffer from being in a far country.

Napoleon Eh?

Rustam To-day my heart falls in ruins for thee.

Napoleon Why?

Rustam When I put on thy boots, when I hold thy mirror for shaving, or lie on guard at night, I have watched thy lips working with unuttered things. Now, after years, I can read them.

Napoleon What words do I mutter that you can read?

Rustam 'Be strong, deceive, strike!'—Of these three things art thou composed.

Napoleon 'Be strong, deceive, strike!' eh?

Rustam Ay, lord.

Napoleon What of it?

Rustam Go not against this northern island.

Napoleon Why not?

Rustam Forgive thy servant, but believe him.

Napoleon Go not northward?

Rustam What is all this ash-grey sea worth—with its serpent voice—that the very dogs bark against at night? Is there lordship yonder, where all minds are turbulent? Is there glory there? No. The tombs of glory lie in the Pyramids. Is death lucid there? No. The melting

of a pale smoke into a white cloud. But between the Lebanons, along the red valley of young green corn, where sun is on the fruit trees in blossom—through apricots and almonds, the eyelids of the morning—there lies the way to Baalbec, the Temple of the Sun!

Napoleon

Well?

Rustam

Eastward lies the road of conquerors—Asia is for thee!

Napoleon

Where were you born?

Rustam

(*Proudly*) At Tiflis—in the path of Alexander!
(*Pause*)

Napoleon

He went south of you. (*Pause*) Who ate my cold chicken last night?

RUSTAM, though abashed, is unshaken.

Rustam

Tempt not, to-morrow, this grey sea!

Napoleon

Is some thirst for home, or for womankind, upon thee? Have *I* a country? Have *I* kindred? No, I am an outlaw and an instrument, like thee. But for me, greater than any who ruled on Euphrates, this western space is necessary.

Rustam

So to-morrow thou *wilt* sail with the map-maker?

Napoleon

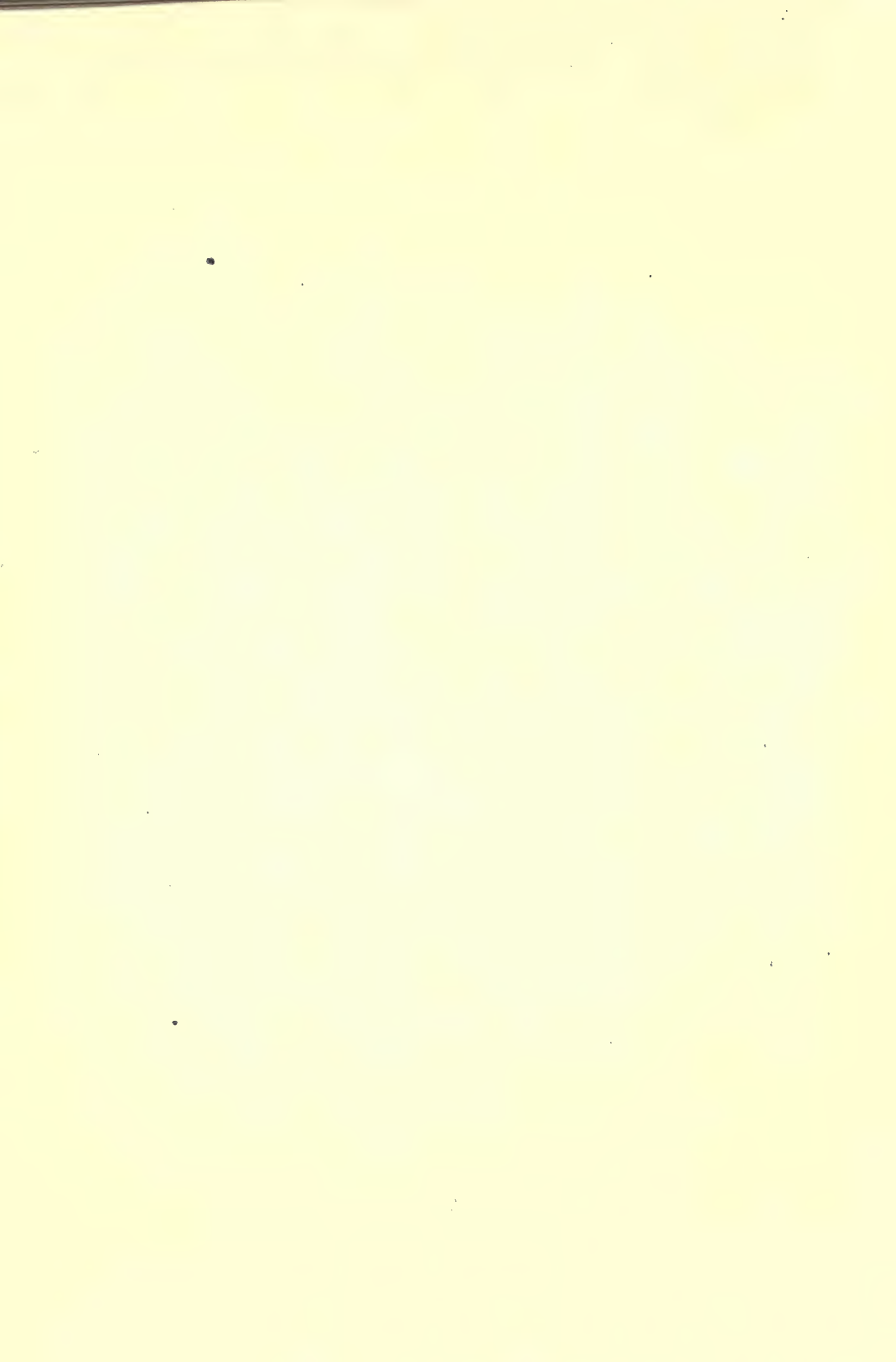
It is to-night I sail, without him. His maps, in his ship yonder, I take. But the map-maker himself I leave behind.

RUSTAM bows and retires.

Hey ho! I believe the fellow loves me! What if the dog's right?—My sun to set westward, like any common sun? I am worn out between this east and west. '*Be strong, deceive, strike!*' We must pension him off, he's getting too intelligent!

END OF ACT II.

ACT III



ACT III. SCENE I

The Sloop's Cabin.

Night at sea in the Channel, on board the sloop. A small ship's cabin, panelled in wood. A ladder leads out of it, and another door towards a passage forward. A hanging lamp is burning. There are a rude table and chairs. A hatch in the floor is standing open by the table. There is a small raised stove on legs, with a metal chimney that issues through the roof of the cabin. Two young NAVAL OFFICERS are kneeling on the floor by an open coffer of papers.

An AIDE-DE-CAMP enters.

A.D.C. (Shuddering) Ugh! I am to ask whether you have found Wickham's charts, gentlemen?

1st Lt. Not a sign of them.

A.D.C. Fog, fog, everywhere. But it's not that that I mind most.

1st Lt. What do you mind most?

A.D.C. That balanced hand!

2nd Lt. What hand?

A.D.C. That arm you (*Nodding towards the 1ST LT.*) told me of. . . . Stretched up so stark out of the sea. . . . my God!

2nd Lt. You mean before the fog came on?

A.D.C. Yes. I am Breton, and these things affect me. An arm out of the sea, rigid, at an impossible angle! Was it crying for vengeance? Was it dragging a heavy weight out of the water with the other hand?

1st Lt. He means the man we saved.

2nd Lt. Saved?

1st Lt. Well, no fault of ours—one may call it saved.

A.D.C. What can he have been trying to lug out of the dark?

2nd Lt. Why, some shipmate. I saw the face of a second—a younger chap.

A.D.C. What! Another in the water?

2nd Lt. Yes. It had a livid mark on the forehead. I stretched an oar to him. He closed his eyes—as if in the last distaste—and sank.

1st Lt. Good job too! With them on board the fog won't lift.

A.D.C. goes out.

Gilded popinjay!

2nd Lt. 'Tisn't good to have landsmen aboard.

1st Lt. Let's make him aware of it!

Two men enter with two small kegs of powder.

Man Where stow away the spare powder, sir?

1st Lt. Under this hatch with the rest of the powder.

The kegs are rapidly deposited. The hatch in the floor is closed. The two men go out.

2nd Lt. By the way, where's the Emperor?

1st Lt. In the wheel-house, with the Captain.

2nd Lt. In this fog? He can see nothing.

1st Lt. About that he paid me a compliment!

2nd Lt. A yarn!

1st Lt. Savage over coming aboard late—a compliment, I tell you! The infallible bully's uneasy at last! He's felt the power of the sea. Live so long as live he may—now he'll have the sea underneath him.

2nd Lt. Well, so have we—On with you.

1st Lt. Dense fog everywhere—and the decks all greasy—the Captain finds the godlike creature hanging on a companion ladder, looking dismal—and invites him to stand the middle watch with him. In the wheel-house all was glum. Delpierre, the pilot, at the wheel, in tarpaulin high boots—his whiskers just lit by the glimmer of the binnacle lamp—pays the godlike creature no jot of

attention. At last he breaks out with: 'I didn't know pilots were so fat! You sleep too much. Why were you asleep yesterday when you were sent for?' Delpierre grins in silence, like a hobgoblin. 'You seem to take yourself, sir, a deal of credit for living a life of comfort!' Delpierre answers hollow as an owl, 'I had been up all night for two nights at the wheel, beating in from Dunkirk on another sloop.' Rich, eh?

2nd Lt.

How did you save the situation?

1st Lt.

I cried out, 'Now we're passing over a shoal, sir. Now we're over the shoalest water!' And the shaven one wheels round the flash of his jungle-cat eye on me, and says, 'How are you sure of that?' 'By the quicker sound of rippings, and the ship's talking.' 'And how do you know where we are?' 'By the line of soundings we keep. Yonder's the leadsman singing in the chains!' 'Are we near England?' 'No,' says I, 'off the north bank of the Varne . . . I can *bear* the English coast when we come nigh.' 'What! Have your ears got feelers out like a snail?' 'No, but there's a half-dead echo from the shore, before the cliffs loom up.' And he stares at me! 'Your ears are the ears of the mind!'

A.D.C. enters.

A.D.C.

His Majesty will sup here. His compliments, and he hopes that both of you gentlemen will take a grilled bone with him and the Captain.

Both

Much obliged to his Majesty.

A.D.C.

He refuses to turn in . . . How oppressive this air—dense with fate!

1st Lt.

We have a pleasing venture on hand. . . .

A.D.C.

Naturally; but my chief's a trifle put out over this loss of time.

2nd Lt.

Ah, has the black ox trodden on *your* foot?

A.D.C.

The soak of this fog appals one! No land—no sea—no sky! We're swathed in a coffin of grey feathers—

slung in a cloud. The ship's blind—buried—. . . .
Where *are* we?

1st Lt. As near the cold bottom, my son, as a beggar to poverty!

A.D.C. How heavily the seconds go at sea! Do you think that younger fellow, with the scar on his face, may not have risen again?

1st Lt. Who knows?

A.D.C. You said nothing of these drowned men to him above?
(*With a gesture towards the upper deck.*)

1st Lt. Not yet.

A.D.C. Say nothing—it would be the last straw.

The STEWARD enters with JAN. They prepare the table rapidly for food.

1st Lt. What, the English youngster? . . . Who on earth released him?

Steward To help wait, by the Captain's orders, sir.

The two OFFICERS watch them critically.

The table laid, both servants go out.

1st Lt. That's the boy that scratched me with a dirk, when we boarded.

2nd Lt. Here's the Captain!

The CAPTAIN of the Port enters.

Captain The Emperor's coming down. *Harkye!* Amuse him—distract him.

A.D.C. He's fuming over the missing charts. I wish we could get in under land as quick as we can.

Captain We intend to.

1st Lt. Till the ship's cleared of dead, we're in an ill case.

Captain (*Ironically*) Much obliged for your opinion!

NAPOLEON enters, affecting briskness.

Napoleon Well, the fog has masked us through the English blockade. Sit, gentlemen. (*They sit*) Take pot luck. In this mirk we might as well be tompons inside a twelve-pound gun!

They eat in silence. A noise of hurrying feet is heard overhead.

Napoleon

What's that?

All listen. A voice is heard outside.

Voice

Stand aby there! Let me pass, I say!

Captain

(Rises, and shouts up through the hatchway) No noise!

Voices

Give us a lantern! The fog's so thick that a man running was near overboard!

Captain

A man running?

Voice

One of the swabbers fears ghosts; and won't go near the forecastle. We want a lantern, sir.

Captain

The binnacle-light shall be the only light on deck! Off with you, soft-headed lubbers! We have a staff-officer on board.

The noises of feet on deck depart.

Napoleon

Why is one of the swabbers afraid to go near the forecastle?

Captain

Sir, he fears a dead man there. It seems that once a year the drowned rise off the Varne bank, and have a right to come aboard their old ships!

Napoleon

How came the dead man there?

Captain

Your Majesty's arrival being delayed, we were hanging about off shore, when we were hailed by cries like drowning. We made out two heads in the water to starboard. We passed the bight of a rope round one man, and hauled him up. The other, whom the first was supporting, slipped back under the lee counter, and sank. The older man we stripped and rubbed, and poured brandy into—but he was bound beyond the farthest fishing-grounds

Napoleon

Were you right to hamper me with this?

Captain

Let a Normandy fisherman drown, sir?

Napoleon

To have tried to save them will create a good local impression—You were right. You have left the body of the older man on deck?

Captain

Under a tarpaulin.

- 1st Lt. Why not heave him overboard?
 Captain You've heard his Majesty's opinion. We'll give him a funeral in his own village.
- Napoleon (*Viewing the wine in his glass*) Well, if it's annoying to be taken in by Vicamp about his maps—it's good luck to have his cabin!
- Captain (*Raising his glass*) To the absent owner!
 Napoleon To the absent owner!
 Officers And a foggy end to all skulking blockaders!
- During this conversation the mess STEWARD has been waiting on them; JAN enters, and waits also.*
- Napoleon Who is that freckled monkey?
 Captain The master's brother. Your name, boy?
 Jan Jan Wickham.
- NAPOLEON *looks up quickly.*
- Captain Are you afraid of us?
 Jan A little, sir.
 Captain Hungry? Here's a crust for courage. The French are never afraid.
- Jan I'm English.
 Captain Do you want to grow up an Englishman?
 Jan I think I do, sir.
 Captain Why?
 Jan We're fond of the place.
 Captain O the country's well enough—Though I haven't seen it this gay while: not since I escaped the hulks, and went on all fours by night to Arundel, along the smooth of the Downs. The larks woke me by their singing.—But the people aren't up to their country. Their minds are fuller of hedges.
- Napoleon Hedges. Yes. How can a mob of merchants carry out the long thoughts of a dynasty?
- Captain (*To JAN*) Sing us an English lark-song, and you shall have some soup. (*He motions the boy to sit by him*) The soup's good!

- Jan* Ay, 'tis.
Captain You tasted it outside?
Jan I smelled it under the lee of the galley.
Captain Pity you're not French-born!
Jan I wouldn't half mind a bit of fighting in France.
1st Lt. This is the boy that firked out a knife at me.
Jan (*Gulping soup*) I'd like to have a look at Boney.
Captain Ah, fill your eyes with him, eh?
Jan Our shepherd swears he saw him in a cocked hat and cloak, standing on Dover cliff looking sheer down Channel . . .
- Napoleon* Indeed!
Jan Yes. He's dangerous when he's sad; and he's very melancholy whenever he looks at water. He must have crossed in a smuggler's boat to Eastware Bay. It frightened all the spinster ladies out of our village. They have moved away and settled in Buckinghamshire.
The OFFICERS laugh.
- Napoleon* And this frightened spinster is England—the world's justicer, who professes to keep the balance of power, without a sword in her hand! Boy, all you English take Napoleon for a swaggering freebooter—who drags out campaigns to keep pay in his pocket, eh?
- Jan* Yes, Sir.
Napoleon Born in a cave in an island, brought up to be a brigand—he's a brigand still, eh?
- Jan* That's why I like him, sir.
A.D.C. I bet the boy has a cave of his own. They run ships hard, do caves! (*To JAN*) Where is yours?
- Jan* In the warren of the undercliff.
A.D.C. A cave of brambles, eh? Not a living thing in sight?
- Jan* Blackbirds and stoats.
A.D.C. Crooked briars and traveller's joy, eh? One need wash no more than a bear! One can rob one's family and give them something back!

Jan Sometimes, sir.
Captain Do you know any songs, boy?
Jan Only one my father wrote.
Captain Sing it!
Jan (*Singing*) 'When you were born despairs must die,
 Call her, Echo'

He breaks down, and slightly weeps.

Captain (*Encouragingly*) That's very good—'When you were
 born despairs must die.' (*Looking at NAPOLEON*) That's
 very good Sing Crocketty, Lieutenant! (*To*
NAPOLEON) A gentleman of fortune, sir!

1st Lt. A croak, sir! (*Sings*)
 'All acock rides he
 Daft as his roan,
 Never abides he
 Hot to be gone,
 Crocketty, Crocketty,
 Hammering on,

(Chorus) Crocketty, Crocketty! Crocketty, Crocketty!
 He's drove the ae beast
 From our swingle-tree,
 Where will he drive en to?
 Let him a-be!
 His heart's acast
 And his tongue's awry
 He cannot last,
 Hell's in his eye!
 Drink meant for those ribs
 Through 'em shall run,
 String him aloft
 To dry in the sun,

(Chorus) Crocketty, Crocketty! Crocketty, Crocketty!

Jan (*Recovered*) My brother wants to meet Boney too.
Captain He too?

Jan Father had great hopes of Napoleon once. But Mother looks down on him.

The OFFICERS are amused.

A.D.C. And have you great hopes of him or do you look down on him?

Jan I'd like to fight under him.

Officers Why?

Jan He's such a game little devil.

Captain A cool rogue! How came you to speak French?

Jan Mother's French. She loves France.

Captain And why does she look down on the Emperor?

Jan She says he betrayed the Republic.

There is a pause of general consternation.

Captain That's a piece of foolery you mustn't repeat
Why did your brother take you off to sea at your age?

Jan Geoffrey's good to us. I came as a stow-away.

Captain How, Geoffrey good to you?

Jan He was good to us when Father was in prison—kept us all and went hungry to do it.

Napoleon I did the same myself, once.

1st Lt. And your respected father's trade when out of prison?

Jan Country doctor. He presses a very fine oil out of hops, to make the Kent beer taste of hops. And polishes a reflector to see the moons of Jupiter in. Our shepherd can see them with the naked eye.

Captain What was your father put in prison for?

Jan Thinking too much. They don't like thinking in Kent.

Napoleon —Belongs to the mighty family of all men that are free, eh?

Jan Yes, sir.

Captain We'd all be free if wishing did it—every slave in Europe.

- Napoleon* No blabbing, Captain!
- Captain* Boy, where does your brother keep his charts?
- Jan* I don't know, sir. He'll tell you himself when he comes aboard.
- Captain* You think he's coming? The boat was to lie off shore till he signalled, eh?
- Jan* Yes.
- Captain* Well—not to gull you, boy—he's not coming aboard now.
- Jan* Why not?
- Captain* We're in mid-Channel. He's in France!
- A distant booming sound is heard.*
- 1st Lt.* Drums! One can hear them thirty miles off!
- Napoleon* Drums, no. That's the main battery near my hut. And a staggering flash she gives! It may be the death of the spy.
- Captain* I make the distance fifteen miles.
- 1st Lt.* Hear that, young Cockerel. Can your brother come aboard over fifteen miles of water?
- Jan* He'll come, somehow.
- 1st Lt.* First affront the Emperor—then misdoubt the Captain!—May I dismiss him, sir?
- The CAPTAIN nods.*
- Take your gutfounded fiddlecase out of the cabin?
- The BOY is going.*
- Napoleon* Boy, wake me at three in the morning!
- The BOY retires.*
- 2nd Lt.* Would your Majesty care for cards? 'Vingt-et-un'?
- Napoleon* All games are to me dull as Paris, my good sir. But I'll cock a leg over this armchair and watch you at it—'carte . . . content . . . carte . . . content . . .' till daybreak, eh?
- 1st Lt.* I have it! Let's test that boy's nerve—make an experiment?
- 2nd Lt.* How?

1st Lt. Send him in the dark to the dead man, with a message!

2nd Lt. Vastly amusing! Would your Majesty allow us?
Napoleon As you please.

They ring a bell. JAN appears.

1st Lt. A message, my young nobleman, and don't you forget it! A friend of ours is taking a nap on deck forward. Wake him, with the Captain's compliments, and say he orders him in here to supper.

Jan Shall I take a lantern?

1st Lt. No.

2nd Lt. He must be cold there. Don't let him off!

The Boy goes out unmoved.

1st Lt. Rich! Rich!

2nd Lt. He'll have to feel his way to the man, and touch him to find out!

A.D.C. Suppose he goes crazy with fear?

1st Lt. That hoarse old carrion, Delpierre, will overhear and be chuckling!

A.D.C. (To 1ST LT.) Would you have the pluck to run your own errand?

1st Lt. To our friend forrard? I'd fight naked in a cask with him!

A.D.C. You wanted to heave him overboard!

1st Lt. We'll end with that. May I? (He fills NAPOLEON'S glass.)

They drink.

2nd Lt. A wager—the boy'll not come back.

1st Lt. That's what I say.

A.D.C. For a prank, it's a poor one.

1st Lt. A chemical experiment, I say!

A.D.C. It'll show up a bully. I should like to see your face if the man came.

2nd Lt. The boy won't come back.

Pause. JAN re-enters, serene and composed.

Captain Well?

- Jan* (To CAPTAIN) I can't wake him, sir.
1st Lt. What d'you mean?
Jan He won't wake.
1st Lt. But wake him you must!
Jan I shook him. He's cold.
1st Lt. Monstrous! Is he deaf? Back you go, boy! Say there's a gentleman here that takes no refusals. Stoop down and whisper in his ear, 'By God, you've got to come!' If he won't come at a shout, he'll come at a whisper!
- JAN goes out.*
- 1st Lt.* I said it would be sport!
2nd Lt. The sport's to come!
A.D.C. In order to frighten a child, you'd have horseplay with—
1st Lt. Outrageous isn't it, to men of feeling!
2nd Lt. How tender to teasing we are! Why, it's a fine joke!
A.D.C. A joke that has to be shouted into the ear of a corpse is one too fine for my apprehension.
2nd Lt. Be reasonable.
A.D.C. (To 1ST LT.) Because he jabbed at you with his dirk, and made you skip like a rat!
Captain This time the boy'll guess.
A.D.C. An unhappy body, with the seaweed of his poor fisher's craft about his ears—
Captain We'll pack the boy off quietly to his bunk.
A.D.C. (Sotto voce) Sacrilege.
1st Lt. We want no men of feeling here. Said I well, sir?
2nd Lt. What's that shuffling along the deck?
1st Lt. *JAN re-enters. All, especially the 1ST LT., are surprised at his demeanour.*
2nd Lt. Well?
1st Lt. Well?
Captain What did our wet friend say?
Jan Didn't say anything.
Captain Ah, still asleep?

Jan I think so.
 1st Lt. Think so? You whispered right in his ear?
 Jan Yes.
 1st Lt. Then why the hell didn't you make him come?
 Jan He's coming.
 1st Lt. Coming?
 2nd Lt. Coming?
 Jan Ay.

Pause.

Captain (*With a gesture to the right-hand door*) Boy, you can go.
 JAN retires by the door. Slow steps are heard approaching overhead. WICKHAM, with wild wet hair and deathly pale, in seaman's gear and jersey, slowly and blindly descends through the hatchway, and then gropes along the wall. All are silent.

Wickham (*Seeing none of them*) Does he think to cope with us at drinking salt water? Ha! Ha! no! The end of our horn is in the sea. Now then, what have I come for? If I could only remember what I've come for. Ah! the parley! The parley! This light's too bright, too bright to be seen—and the sea's in my ears too loud to be heard. Flayed alive! One man after another flayed off alive.

Napoleon (*Who has risen, and is standing*) Why, this is Wickham!
The OFFICERS are silent.

See whom you've let come aboard!

Wickham The parley, ah yes, the parley!

Captain He's asleep—delirious.

Napoleon Wait. He's talking to me.

Wickham Suppose this my cabin. Well, no matter, suppose it is. A parley on board, sir. You here, I there. Mid-stream. Equal terms. We'll have our say out, for once. Do you think that the wave stops at the shore?

1st Lt. (*In a low, shuddering voice, with his elbows on his knees, hiding his face in his hands and his forehead*

against the table) O don't look at him! Don't look at him! He's come up off the Varne.

A.D.C. Shall I wake him?

Napoleon No, idiot! Listen! The lid's off the brain.

Wickham Catch that beat. The pulse of the norm we spring back to. Ally yourself with that! Or do you think you can fight the very breath that tossed you up to 'where you are?' (*Pause*) No, little man!

A.D.C. Who's he talking to?

Wickham Only myself! (*Pause*) Ah, I forgot!

He goes to one of the panels; opens it, and feels inside; appears satisfied; shuts it; and returns to his seat—the one formerly occupied by NAPOLEON.

Still giddy!

Captain I'm afraid of this fellow! Shall I turn him out?

Napoleon No. He's a riddle. Tide-watcher, boat-builder, geometer—takes as many forms as he pleases—a kind of Proteus.

Wickham Proteus, yes. Only Proteus storms Heaven. How? In all forms one. Multiple in our lower nature. That makes maps. In our higher, single. I drink to Proteus! But I'll sleep a little first. Then for the parley.

Napoleon He goes on about a 'parley'.

A.D.C. Perhaps he thinks himself Emperor.

Wickham I can't keep you up if you're determined to sink. One of my hands is in Asia, sweeping away the frontier-pillars. Two pillars—no natural boundary—nothing to hinder the stroke. The other's caught in the Channel. It's the breast-stroke that wears one. Too wide a sweep. We're a pretty pair—a pretty pair of brothers! Both determined to sink, eh? Done for. It's the off-current. Utterly done for! What's that? No, slog on, slog on, old man. Change the stroke, I tell you!

Captain He's talking to his mate, that was lost!

Wickham Change the stroke, old man, it'll ease you. With the

side-stroke you'll be seen? Never mind. The parley's aboard, and we shall both get aboard now . . . My God, useless the parley, useless! He'll never listen.

Napoleon

Who won't listen?

Wickham

Why, Napoleon, fool!

Napoleon

Why won't he listen?

Wickham

A monotonous fellow!

Napoleon

What?

Wickham

Still with the hard mind of an artillery-lieutenant of twenty-three.

Napoleon

Eh?

Wickham

No fault of his! What time had he to grow in? Action, action, action, a thousand battles thrust upon him! What time to ponder and mull over things in?

Napoleon

(*To CAPTAIN*) Leave the man to me. Go!

Captain

Sir, the danger! I have to answer to the army for your safety.

Napoleon

Leave him with me.

A.D.C.

Why will your Majesty always run it so fine?

Captain

You can carry things through on a spun yarn, sir; but he may be armed.

Napoleon

Keep watch outside. But don't disturb us.

They go out. NAPOLEON and WICKHAM are left alone.

Wickham

Junkettings at this hour? Why these junkettings? And you? Who you are I neither know nor care. Sleep and welcome! Shake down on the floor anywhere before the fire. Did you bring a light, mate?

NAPOLEON silently offers him a flint-and-steel box.

Wickham

Somewhere I've seen that face of yours before.

Napoleon

You have.

Wickham

No matter. Lie wherever you like. (*He strikes a light*) But for crushed thumbs, he swam well.

Napoleon

Eh?

Wickham But for crushed thumbs, I say, he wouldn't have done so badly. Mate?

Napoleon Ask away.

Wickham What have you done with my brother?

NAPOLEON, surprised, makes no answer.

Wickham (*Louder*) What have you done with my brother?

Napoleon I haven't seen him.

Wickham Is that so? Ah well, I remember, he sank. (*He kneels before the stove to blow up the fire.*) The art of fire is never lost, they say. But the art of setting souls on fire will be lost when I lose France. These cloudy masses, they don't understand themselves. What harm in that? I understand for them. One spark will expand them to power—limitless power. Lightnings must be controlled, Wickham! Controlled! And yet—yet by the living God—I'm sinking! What has brought them up from the Atlantic so thick about me? . . . One could fight these waves, but that every wave has a ghost's head!

Napoleon Recollect! This is your ship. You're aboard your own ship, Wickham.

Wickham Is Wickham in command?

Napoleon No. I am.

Wickham I left Watt in command—old Watt.

Napoleon I'm in command.

Wickham Give Wickham back his ship! Give Wickham back his brother! Before I go to sleep—You shall, you shall!

Napoleon I cannot.

Wickham You can't browbeat me, my nipping friend! I may not know your face, but you I know.

Napoleon Who am I?

Wickham Why, nothing but myself—myself! Once a great body of pure fire—but now, sinking, sinking, sinking!

Long pause.

Napoleon Wake! Wake! (*Seizes his arm*) You seemed a man,

and offered me your survey. Why palter with me, like the rest?

Wickham (Passing his hand over his eyes) Ah, you want maps—
—I had forgotten maps.

Napoleon Your work I trusted. Why break faith in that?

WICKHAM rises unsteadily, goes in a dazed manner to the panel, takes out the maps and flings them down.

Wickham There they are.

He re-seats himself at the table and leans his head on his hands. NAPOLEON falls on the maps and examines them devouringly.

Napoleon By God! This work's superb!

WICKHAM remains with his head in his hands.

Napoleon (To himself) Superb! What scale? The approaches. All the depths. These are the shoals. This must have taken years! Is this cliff-road metalled? No, a sheep-track. Six hours to engineer a road for guns, from the undercliff. What's this place marked in blue, a mile inland?

WICKHAM makes no answer.

This is insufferable! He's asleep! Come here, man! (Drags him over) I take back all—Your work's incredibly fine. What's the blue site a mile inland from the cliff?

Wickham (Slowly) Oh that? A farm-house—my father's.

Napoleon Ah—not a fort?

Wickham No.

Napoleon It has a tower.

Wickham A ruined tower.

He buries his head in his hands again, and seems asleep.

Napoleon (Intent on the maps; not observing WICKHAM) Look here! You must enter my service instantly. I make you, at once, inspector of all my northern coasts. But you must interpret these to me. Do you hear? Incon-

ceivable!—he's asleep! Ten thousand curses! There's no time! No matter, he'll awake.

Pause.

Wickham (*Looking up*) What use for me to wake? It's time for me to drop out of the light.—You too.

Napoleon What! You'll wake a new man! You'll wake in the imperial service!

Wickham I will not wake, I tell you! The parley's ruined.

Napoleon Why? The conditions are perfect; just what was settled. Here are your charts. But time presses: the fog may lift at any moment. What you have to say, man, say! Say on, say on!

Wickham Say on! And my brother's body like the rest, washing faceless upon some mud-bank! Say on—and I your prisoner! Say on—and the key to the gates of England (*With a gesture towards the maps*) in your bloody hands! Out of my sight you—you infamy of glory!

He breaks down, and leans back, his head thrown back and eyes closed.

Napoleon This is not madness. What you want is rest. He's utterly exhausted. Sleep there. (*Looking at his watch*) I'll spare you two hours to recover in. Sleep!

WICKHAM gradually falls back asleep, in the chair by the fire. NAPOLEON puts six lighted candles down on the floor and stretches himself on the maps on his stomach, with a pair of compasses in his hand.

The curtain falls gradually.

ACT III. SCENE II

The Threshold. Night.

MRS. ANNE WICKHAM comes out from a house-door of the Abbey farm-house, and speaks from the steps of a threshold.

Anne Are you there, Shepherd?

Voice Yes, Madam, in the yard.

Anne I cannot sleep . . . Will you do something for me?

Voice Surely, Madam, anything.

Anne I've had a dream . . . my sons struggling on a cliff, and falling back from a little narrow shelf into . . . (*She pauses*)

Voice Eh?

Anne They fell, and fell, and fell, and I—as it were into the sea.

Voice What shall I do?

Anne Go across the fields to the cliff's edge, and look. See if the fog has lifted anywhere, and the sloop's in sight.

Voice Going now, Ma'am.

She goes in from the threshold, out of sight.

ACT III. SCENE III

The Sloop's Cabin.

The interior of the Cabin. It is still night but not so dark. The candles on the floor have burned down and are guttering and bearded. NAPOLEON is still stretched on the floor, with one shoulder leaning against the cabin wall and head thrown back, asleep.

The boy JAN enters to awake NAPOLEON. He sees with amazement his brother, GEOFFREY WICKHAM, who rises with a gesture of silence and embraces the boy. JAN explains by gesture that he should wake NAPOLEON. WICKHAM refuses. He presses the boy's head to his breast and motions him out of the cabin. JAN goes out.

Wickham (*Looking down on NAPOLEON*) What can be measured with compasses? Wake, phantom!

Napoleon (*Waking*) My eyelids closed. I saw you through them. Rested?

Wickham I am myself again. My head is clear.

Napoleon Do you hate me still?

Wickham I'm indifferent—indifferent as a dream.

Napoleon You had just grievances.—Spoke out of the lips of your wound.

Wickham Grievances? What grievances?

Napoleon Grief for a brother's an engaging folly;

Any seal or camel can shed tears.

Be above these animal ties, Wickham!

What will they signify a century hence?

Transcendent geometry's the game!

How infinitely sounder than to be a man

It is to be map-maker! Keep ice-cold!

Keep at the height of your career in science!

That's the sublime—to serve the superhuman. (*Pause*)

But you think the art of life's to follow fieldpaths—

Then why cross mine, the dangerous highroad?

- Wickham* Your Roman road—the beaten way—is barren.
I came to show another.
- Napoleon* By the way.
These charts—Are the maps false?
- Wickham* No—true.
- Napoleon* Do you know it crossed my mind they were a lure,
To bring me to mid-channel, to murder me?
- Wickham* To murder?—no.
- Napoleon* Well, tempt me out here?
- Wickham* Tempt?—hardly.
- Napoleon* To what end?
- Wickham* To reason.
- Napoleon* Reason!
- Wickham* There was your letter of invitation;
I had blood of France and England in my veins;
And what's still common to both peoples—reason.
Napoleon Reason, fanatic?—Yet the maps are sane!—
And if reason failed, I was your prisoner?
Wickham If you went back without my maps, then free.
Napoleon But if I kept the maps—your prisoner?
Wickham Yes.
- Pause.*
- Napoleon* And now, by God, you are mine! . . .
Well, I'll hear reason now!
- Wickham* Any Bourbon would be willing to hear reason,
So reason spoke only from a cage. . . .
Too late—no change of heart in sight of Dover.
Napoleon But you are free.
- Wickham* How free?
- Napoleon* Take your cursed ship!
Persuade,—convince!—convert me, and I'll go back;
Speak out! Convert me!
- Wickham* To what?
- Napoleon* Stark truth!
- Wickham* You do not want it—are too old to hear it.
Napoleon From you, I swear, I'll take it.

- Wickham* (*With irony*) Openness to persuasion is your shining Quality . . . I shall have much weight with you!
- Napoleon* Well then; persuade me!
- Wickham* What, after all? . . .
- Is it possible—after all? . . .
- I am too weak to speak in liquid fire.
- What do you want to hear?
- Napoleon* (*With humour and triumph*) The famous parley!
- What are the faults you have to find with me?
- Wickham* The rats that gnaw the feet of the Colossus?
- You have no faith.
- Napoleon* Nothing but that?
- Wickham* Overmastery;
- You sit at the receipt of all men's wishes
And spider-like, are over-blown—puffed up,
Making them yours.
- Napoleon* That 's the main charge?
- Wickham* No. Blindness.
- Terrible presences assigned you honour;
Human societies stand watching you,
And ring on ring, divine fraternities.
Yet of the very breath that makes them grow
You have no apprehension.
- Napoleon* So—I am blind?
- Wickham* Wall-eyed as any man in Europe.
- Napoleon* Why?
- Wickham* Have you not overlooked the strategy
Of Life? You should be serving Life!
- Napoleon* I serve?
- I must be free as air—unanswerable—
Cold as a natural law.
- Wickham* What of your footing?—
- Have you forgot your human footing?
- Napoleon* What is my footing?
- Wickham* Sir, the loves that bred you
And sent you forth . . . You have none else. Nor I.

Napoleon But you—did you come as friend? To help, or thwart me?

Wickham If you were defender of France, then to help;
If the aggressor on England—then to thwart.

NAPOLEON makes a gesture, indicating justification of his own surmise.

Are you the aggressor in this war? Who knows?
It may be this night's a high water-shed
Pouring your purposes this way or that,
For ever.

Napoleon Perhaps. It may be so, my friend.

But tell me why you crossed.

Wickham An act of faith, an act of faith in you!
Might not your course by a feather be diverted?
And that seagull's feather be myself?

Napoleon How so?

Wickham You were still the out-thrust of the human bough—
Not yet its rise and poise—the second self;
Still seeking to re-forged our molten world
To your own image. Do we not both seek
Perfection?

The rainbow seen with the eye of the dew-drop? Ay,
But *whose* perfection?

Napoleon Yes, I am an artist:

I am an artist whose brushwork is forces.

Wickham Ah!

Waves have hit upon my face like stirrup-irons—
O for words like them against you! . . . Forces!
You deal with forces only of ripe men
At the moment of their ripeness for the cannon.
You ignore the heave of the whole human ring
Of lives at every moment—every age;
The forces in the frail things you ignore . . .

Napoleon How?

Wickham Think of the strengths just rippling in the dances

Of a little child, that shall jet it like a fountain
 Up to seventy years of living after us—
 Children, that are our fearless dreams come true,
 These are the strengths that you would now bleed white
 And at their pale cost stretch your glories wider ;
 These are the strengths that you had once behind you—
 Have you them now ?

Napoleon
Wickham

I must establish order.
 Have you never yet felt how the human order
 May time with the universal ?

Napoleon
Wickham

Never yet.
 Nor, breaking through your husk, become aware
 Of the multiverse of selves beholding you,
 Rising like flowers—all the seeking eyes of God ?
 Never yet.

Napoleon
Wickham

Strange, strange ! When I saw it first
 The sudden sight scarce gave me room to breathe !
 The long crystalline streams, coil above coil,
 Like coils of mighty music flung around us
 Embranched as within a sea's transparency—
 The flowing eddies from one breath thrown off—
 From blazing nebula change, with us, to leaves
 Of our dark forest—human families ;
 Spiral rise of innumerable stems
 Into chalices full of that intenses light
 Of delicate love, that makes each chalice loved—
 Brims it with slow care, insight, wonder, warmth,
 Brims it, and sighs, and ceases—colouring new
 Frail petals.
 All the world's tragedies are wrecks of these
 And the flame of all the mysteries is there !
 It is the tide, the tide of generations
 Filling with deep throb the homes . . . Can you not
 feel it,
 The great pulsation that is but too slow
 For our brief life's observance ?

Napoleon Your tide-work taught you poetry. I seek order.
Where in your vision comes the ordered State?

Wickham There lies our fault—we have forgot the order!
First rise the families;—after—the souls;
Then let the State make citizens.

Napoleon Pooh! The family!

Wickham So close, so close to us
That we know nothing of it! Clustered order
Woven like the weaving of women.

Napoleon Yours is a faith
For peasants—No room for soldier, artist, Caesar—
No base for the sublime.

Wickham What if this common flame *be* the sublime?

Napoleon Eh?

Wickham There is a Roman worship, not of Caesar,
That yet may make our broken world one realm.
What if the hearth-light *be* the light of Heaven?
And our smoky earth-born fire leap to its fellow
Unborn, to lift for us the future
Temples of Vesta—glowing, pure, and free?
Napoleon Sheer poetry.

Wickham Its sands will not run out
When we do. Test it for yourself—it's *there*!
The core!

Napoleon Mere dreams, mere dreams!

Wickham And yet more real than we
Are the mere dreams we die for. . . .
Why do we rise to our full height as men
Only when this is threatened?

Napoleon What would you have me do?

Wickham Ally yourself
With this vast natural underlying form
That strives to use us for its own perfection.
Can you defeat the forest's thirst to flower?
Defend the families!

Napoleon How well I know them!

Do the men of France pay me to be their brother?
 A sympathetic burgess in their likeness?
 They pay me for my difference from themselves.
 Soft, vain, light, weak, pay me to be of iron,
 Utterly pitiless, on their behalf.
 And when my ruthlessness has served its turn
 Would pitch me away.

Wickham

Yours is a nightmare world.

Is there any reason why the family
 Should stand for ever what it is to-day—
 Dulled by mismating, foiled of joy?

Napoleon

(*Musing*) You think

That the familial love enlarged by mind—
 This group of instincts sublimated—
 Has tidal force, the force of the ideal?

Wickham

Ay—though the beat be slow!

Napoleon

As if the sea

Could grasp one with a hand?

Wickham

Ay!

Napoleon

Strange—

'Tis strange indeed, the thing that you contend:
 That I must serve the families—these first;
 That size of body to my realms is nothing
 Beside this vein that's vital to them all

Wickham

The spirit in the midst . . . yes.

Pause.

Napoleon

You are right.

But it's beyond me, Wickham, it's beyond me,
 Too slow. I must stick to skill I understand—
 The sword. . . .

Wickham

My hand's a trifle quicker than those fellows'.
 Yours is a nightmare world.

Napoleon

Yes, a wilderness of individuals—

The strongest, I!

The strongest, I!— . . . Well, to think you came as
 friend!

Wickham I came as fool, sir, for I had remembered—
 Though I could have cursed myself that cared for you—
 The half-starved leader of inspired battalions
 When the red earth rose in furrows after you
 Sweeping through Italy, that as you came
 Leapt up as a dog leaps to meet its master—
 The starry voice that was to free mankind!
 What though you proved her plunderer, and a king? . . .
 I had remembered only that France trusts you,
 Infinitely loves—what a strange patience love is!—
 Infinitely trusts whom she has so rewarded.

Napoleon Why not?

Wickham You are changed, Napoleon.
 Asia has at a touch transformed
 Young Caesar. Now upon the desert's gate
 Sits an Egyptian vulture, brooding, brooding,
 Over old sand. Old desert news he hears:
 Two thousand prisoners sick are shot at Jaffa;
 Sackfuls of rebel heads poured out in Cairo
 In the public square, to over-awe the people.
 It was young Perseus, deliverer of France,
 It was my Captain, did these things—'Twas you.
 You're faint. Loss of blood?

Napoleon

Wickham

Napoleon

Not of mine.
 You are too sore. I know your Jacobin ditty,
 I betrayed the Republic—Well, I saved the Revolution!
 I cooled the hot-heads, but I fired the cold!
 France has more need of me than I of her,
 And if I fall—and I shall never fall—
 It is Europe shall be humbled, and not I!

Wickham

Are you then so alone? France speaks not there!
 You starve the real world of attention, sir.
 All eyes must watch the conjurer self-entranced
 In jugglery. By a moment's single gesture
 You build up to the moon a double empire;
 In Europe here, the State of Charlemagne;

In the Asian Seas, the State of Alexander.—
 A Fakir's mad and solitary dance—
 But in this tempest-flinging dervish dance
 Is there the gesture of recovery?
 True, you have Caesar's head on Alexander's
 Body. All laws are to ray from you
 Like roads from Rome, and each to carry cannon.
 'Tis you who hold the Bourbon's bed of justice,
 Where Justice used to sleep. You are a conqueror.
 The mob's new sovrantry you hold by law—
 And hold by genius. These four solitudes
 Support your feet. What depths from you to us!
 Our world's a pyramid with you to plume it
 In deserts strewn with carrion. . . . But if alone
 Then on what trunk of common faith or passion
 Dream you to engraft so wide an empire—
 So airy and so shadowy? Is for you
 Earth panorama—Heaven, phantasmagoria?
 For you no other souls exist. . . .
 You see too much.

Napoleon
Wickham

And you, too little.

Because you have no loves you have no eyes.
 Your naked energy working lovelessly,
 Be it balanced like a planet, is not wise.
 Not born to the purple, you have climbed to the purple—
 Ha!

Napoleon
Wickham

But were it the purple of the porphyries of Sinai
 Why should it weigh on us?

Napoleon
Wickham

Dreamer! You speak in violent foreshortenings.
 You are the dreamer, and the figment, you!
 How we have suffered from you, ghosts of Caesar,
 Suffered through concentrations of our hope
 Age after age about your glittering figures
 That have polarised and crystallised and chained!
 Awake! Rome left our tribes one great bequest,
 Her law. That's in our blood, absorbed for ever.

But is then Europe's many-fountain'd forest
Bubbling with ten thousand springs of life—clans,
nations,

Coloured by the ruddy soils from whence they spring,
Is this multi-coloured insuppressible world
To be controll'd from one centre? Not again!
To be twice Roman'd? Never!

The grass will lift you as it lifts the stone.

Napoleon

But now—what would you have me do? Now, now?

Wickham

(After a brief pause)

Up to this night, you have made great wars. Return,
And make peace great; build the new France;
Deepen her liberties; subtilise her laws,
And make her justice tender.

Pause.

Napoleon

Trash! I'll not hear you. Give me back the maps,—
The one with your farm-house marked!

Wickham

Listen, man, listen!

We have a hundred births before we die—
Re-births to Beauty. Miracles renew us.
Even now, at the eleventh hour, go back!

WICKHAM takes a live coal from the little raised stove and suspends it in his fingers over the hatch which he has opened, unseen by Napoleon, and leant back against the table.

Will you go back?

NAPOLEON is silent.

Wickham

You have tried all arts of government save one,
The impersonal—the art of self-effacement.
What self is that which you would now impose?
One whose light is darkness. Still you are human,
You, who fought long for France—Go back to her!
Defend her great pulsation!

Napoleon

To go back would confess me guilty.

Wickham

No—transformed.

Voices of OFFICERS are heard outside.

Voices Sir, the fog's lifted—the coast of England's in sight—
day breaking.

Wickham Daybreak! Will you return?

Napoleon And why return, just when your boat becomes
convenient? My dear reprover, am I not to land?

Wickham Then he who gave the key must take it back.

(Laying his hand on the maps.)

Napoleon *(Disregarding this)* Who are the guilty? Those
who would have entrapped me. Can the guilty condemn,
O brotherly love?

Wickham The sting is just—and yet because 'tis just
There is the grievance that we have against you.
Yes, because our better selves worshipped this man
Who seemed a stormy daybreak, we must lose them.
Bear witness how he twists the friendly hands
And makes them do against the light we live by
His muddy work of murder!

*He drops the live coal, unseen, into the magazine
of gunpowder barrels. A thin fume ascends.*

Napoleon What's that you're muttering? Think about your
future career, my friend.

Wickham Let it go up in smoke.

Napoleon Nonsense! You'll enter my service. What more can
you look for?

Wickham Nothing, sire—but, perhaps, the eternal! *(He drops
another glowing coal into the magazine. Another thin fume
ascends.)*

Napoleon Fool! Time's everything! The eternal is the actual.

Wickham Here, now, and beyond escape!

*He drops another red coal into the hatch.
Another fume ascends. NAPOLEON perceives
the smoke and rings the bell.*

The OFFICERS break in.

Voices Smoke! Sir, what's this? The magazine! Down
hatch!

- 1st Lt. The spare powder! He has fired it!
 *WICKHAM is overwhelmed, and run through
 the body from behind. He falls back. The
 powder is quenched. All are silent.*
- Captain Does your Majesty intend to go on, after this?
Napoleon Yes.
- Captain Beating about till nightfall?
Napoleon Yes.
- 2nd Lt. (*Pointing at WICKHAM*) Shall he be thrown over-
 board?
- Napoleon* No, keep the body, it may be useful when we land.
 2nd Lt. (*Stooping over WICKHAM'S body*) Not quite dead.
 There's a spark in the flask yet! He's saying some-
 thing. 'The boy, the boy. . . .'
- Napoleon* What is it?
Wickham (*Rising on his arm, to NAPOLEON*) The boy *did* come
 to wake you.
- Napoleon* (*Looking at WICKHAM*) He too?
 WICKHAM sinks back again unconscious.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV



ACT IV. SCENE I

The Abbey Farm-house

The study in the Farm-house, towards evening. MRS. WICKHAM is discovered alone.

Anne (Looking out of the window) At last! At last!
(She goes towards the door.)

DOCTOR WICKHAM enters.

Anne Where did you get my message?

Doctor (Embracing her) It caught me at Dover.

Anne Have you seen the sloop?

Doctor Yes.

Anne I told you how marvellous the shepherd's sight was. He saw her from the cliff—through a rift in cloud. Alas! She's in enemy hands!

Doctor No; she's recaptured.

Anne Recaptured?

Doctor She came in to-day to Dover roads.

Anne The sloop recaptured!

Doctor Is there grief in that? No—the grief's this, that none of the three are on board her. *None of the three!*

Anne What of Ray? No news of Raymond?

Doctor None. Is he lost, a prisoner in France, like Geoffrey?
—Who knows?

Anne It must have been Ray that fell, and fell, and fell...
Whom did you meet?

Doctor Two of the crew released.

Anne Where are they?

Doctor Talking to the coast-guard in the lane.

Anne The coast-guards coming here? Why?

Doctor The coast-guards are coming on a wild-geese chase.

Anne Coming here? That's strange!

Doctor They say they have seen on the summit of our Tower,

a figure among the ivy—a cloaked figure—surveying the country with a glass.

Anne Here, on Radegund's ruined tower?

Doctor Yes, by our yard—The Abbey tower—

Anne You told them 'twas absurd?

Doctor Of course. I laughed at them: told them to come. You can give them old ale in the kitchen.

Anne They will make a noise. I cannot have a noise!

Doctor Why, what has happened?

Anne I'll go out and arrange things. (*She goes out.*)

MARGARET *enters*. *Her manner is agitated.*

Doctor Tired, my child?

Margaret (*Hastily*) Not in the least.

DOCTOR WICKHAM *is going to enter his laboratory.*

Margaret Don't go in there, father.

Doctor Is my own study barred me?

Margaret Yes, for a while. Mother wished it.

Doctor (*Pointing to a cloak on the table*) Whose cloak is this?

Margaret I hadn't noticed it.

Doctor (*Taking it up and examining it*) It's just like Geoffrey's. (*He replaces it on the table.*)

Margaret Is it?

Doctor I don't understand why your mother sent for me.

Margaret She felt you should come.

MRS. WICKHAM *re-enters*.

Anne My man, Geoffrey is here!

Doctor Geoffrey here?

Anne Yes. Watch by him, Margaret—go upstairs.

MARGARET *goes out*.

Doctor I must see him.

Anne You cannot see him, dear. He's ill; wounded; in danger.

Doctor I must tell him how I doubted him—so ignobly.

- Anne* Stay—he's asleep—he mustn't be wakened
William, he's dying.
- Doctor* How did he come back ?
- Anne* Wait and hear. Last night, soft, softly, earth, thrown up at my window, roused me. In the garden I found a little pallid, shivering elf—Jan.
- Doctor* Jan!
- Anne* With his finger to his lips. He was strangely unexcited; no tears. His message was, that Geoffrey, drowning in the Channel, had been picked up—saved by French seamen. An officer of theirs would bring him up here, in a litter; but on one condition—shelter for the Frenchman himself, for four-and-twenty hours.
- Doctor* You promised the French officer safeguard here? You could give no such promise.
- Anne* I gave it.
- Doctor* But to give it was treason!
- Anne* Were we not, at all costs, to receive our son? . . .
By the cliff path from the warren, in a swoon, they brought him—half unconscious. He recognized me, William, once—spoke once.
- Doctor* I must see him! I must save him!
- Anne* You cannot—now the coast-guards—Send them away! Send them away!
- Doctor* How hurt at heart I was—what words I used, when the poor lad sailed! I must see him.
- Anne* First put off the men!
- Doctor* I will tell the coast-guard outright—our son is here—tell all. Where is your French officer?
- Anne* In the walled garden.
- Doctor* We must either give him up or give ourselves up . . .
No lying.
- Anne* But I gave my word of honour to safeguard him.
- Doctor* How safeguard him back to a ship recaptured? How?
- Anne* Solve it you! I leave the question in your hands.
(*She goes out.*)

The DOCTOR is turning to go out by another door to meet the coast-guards when, behind him, NAPOLEON enters from the laboratory.

Napoleon Pardon! Before you hear the coast-guard, sir, hear me. I rescued at sea your drowning son; succoured him; risked my rank to bring him here. I did so under solemn pledge of safety for four-and twenty hours. It would be a lesson, if your pledge is broken, in the humanities.

Doctor Did you survey the country from our tower? Downs—forts—all our coasts?

Napoleon What harm? I knew them. I had an hour to spend. Harkye! Not only did I save his life from drowning—He was pardoned by our Captain though he made an attempt to kill every soul on board. Mark that. Remember that.—I have a triple claim.

MARGARET *re-enters.*

Doctor I see no hope for you. My son is dead!

Margaret Oh, how did you know it, father?

Doctor By your face, my child. (*Pause*) Did he say nothing?

Margaret He said, '*In vain, in vain!*', as all night he kept tossing.

Doctor To think I wronged him! And he will never know it! nor forgive . . .

Margaret To Mother he said once, '*Let me hold your hand; it has life in it still*'.

Napoleon He was sick for great exploit—a noble spirit.

Doctor He was.

Napoleon That was why our Captain saved him.—And I, knowing your country teems with fine revolutionaries—ill-used free spirits—spared him to his father.

Doctor Yet we are not traitors. And your own case, sir, whomsoever you may be, is worse than I have told you.

Napoleon Why?

Doctor Your ship's recaptured.

Napoleon Recaptured? (*Pause*) I am cut off?
Doctor Cut off.
Napoleon (*Shrugging his shoulders*) I have no more to say.
Doctor I'll go and see the coast-guard. This we'll grant you.
 I'll not myself denounce you. Hide; or escape!

He goes out.

NAPOLÉON and MARGARET are left alone in silence. NAPOLÉON turns and looks out of the window with his hands behind him.

MRS. WICKHAM re-enters. She takes no notice of NAPOLÉON, but looks at Geoffrey's cloak lying on the table, leans over it, and kisses it.

Napoleon (*Returning to the table, on which the cloak is lying between him and MRS. WICKHAM*) He who has died for his country has lived long enough.

Anne We guessed well, then—we guessed well!

Napoleon In the sight of Heaven I declare, I did all I could to save your son.

Anne (*Slowly speaking across the table*) No, you did not!

Napoleon Madam, I . . .

Anne Ay . . . When he was drowned you bade him in to supper . . . You forget how well I know him . . . Yet if this could speak (*touching the cloak*) it would ask for your release . . .

Napoleon Madam—

Anne O, we are grateful . . . We know, that for all your kindness to our sons, we women have long reckoning to pay . . . It shall be paid—it shall be paid in full! . . . But who can give back to us what you have taken?

NAPOLÉON turns his back on the company, and faces the window.

DR. WICKHAM re-enters with one of the coast-guards.

Doctor Speak out, man!

Coast-guard (*After a keen glance at Napoleon's back*) We have been told by Mrs. Wickham about the bringing up of Mr. Geoffrey; and, knowing you and Mrs. Wickham these many years, we think the case of the officer is out of our beat to meddle with; against our conscience like. We'd rather leave the deciding of it to you and Mrs. Wickham. We'll wait outside. What you settle we'll abide by.

The COAST-GUARD goes out.

Doctor Anne, the burden of the prisoner lies on you. Decide!
Napoleon (*Turning round*) Let your honour decide.

Anne This evening eight of our fisherman village friends will row you across from the undercliff to France. You are released, sir.

Napoleon (*Astonished, after a pause*) Thanks.

Doctor I'll go tell the coast-guards.

The DOCTOR and MARGARET go out.

Napoleon I have no words . . . Do you mean all's settled?

Anne All settled.

Napoleon And how settled?

Anne

Don't you take sun and moon to witness that you have not come to despoil us of our country? We are merely to own you as a saviour; and as a saviour descended from the sun. Well, sir, from our misty coasts we will let you go.

Napoleon May I ask a question?

Anne Ask, Sir.

Napoleon I see you know me.

MRS. WICKHAM bows.

You mothers solve dark riddles like the lightning. Tell me—for I am curious—tell me . . . your brave son's dead—I *have* looked across your country—Why do you let me go?

Anne

(*After a pause*) Because we are strong enough to let you go! . . . Because you are an enemy so vital, that we can a little mock at you . . . If *you* come to pass, why

ought can come to pass . . . If *you* conquer us, we can afford to laugh—for there's a madness at the root of things . . . When my son was drowned, you bade him in to supper . . . Well, go free! . . . Sup with that! Sup with that, until you die!

Napoleon (In a low voice) And why so sure, Madam, why so sure?

Anne Because you cannot change!—Because so cold a purpose will not change! . . . And there's so deep a power set against you, that we can *rest* upon it . . . All we have lost—(Raising her arms as though to embrace an unseen host innumerable)—all that are yet to come—are in our ranks. You are the eddy—they the tide . . . The boatmen are waiting, sire.

NAPOLÉON goes out.

Anne (Takes up the cloak, and swaying it in her arms, stands with eyes closed. She speaks as to the cloak) O my joy, my joy, art thou satisfied?

ACT IV. SCENE II

Napoleon's Baraque

An interior wall of the Emperor's Baraque, Boulogne. A curtain divides the Emperor, as he speaks, from his secretary, who is unseen.

Napoleon (Walking rapidly up and down with his hands behind his back) Exhausted? No. I can stand the pace for another six years. (Pause) Méneval, go on with the minute! Date it to-morrow—the twenty-sixth of August!

Méneval's Voice The twenty-sixth of August? Ah, the day that Julius Caesar crossed the Channel! Yes.

Napoleon Voice (Dictating) 'On the eve of a general movement'—
Voice 'General movement.'

Napoleon 'I return to Boulogne at seven o'clock in the morning'—

Voice 'Morning.'

Napoleon 'To find my antechamber crowded as terribly as the belly of the Trojan horse'—

Voice 'Horse.'

Napoleon 'But no sentry at the foot of the stairs . . . This is disorderly.'

Voice 'Disorderly.'

Napoleon Now draft a second minute for the Chief of Staff—Berthier!—'Issue the following orders to the Generals of division of the Seven Army Corps of the Grande Armée:—On the Second of September, you will begin your march *en échelon* towards the Rhine.'

Méneval (Tremulously, issuing from behind the curtain) Towards the Rhine?

NAPOLÉON, *disregarding MÉNEVAL, continues the dictation.*

MÉNEVAL *retires quickly behind the curtain.*

Napoleon

'On the Second of September, the First Army Corps, under Marshal Bernadotte, will begin the march from Hanover on Wurzburg.

On the same date the Second Army Corps, under Marshal Marmont, will move from Holland on Mayence.

The Third Army Corps, under Marshal Davoust, will move from Boulogne on Mannheim.

The Fourth Army Corps, under Marshal Soult, from Boulogne on Stuttgart.

The Fifth, under Marshal Lannes, from Wimereux on Strasburg.

The Sixth, under Marshal Ney, from Etaples, also on Strasburg.

The Seventh, under Marshal Augereau, will follow Ney, on the same date, from farther west, on Strasburg.

The Imperial Guard will march from Paris under Marshal Bessières.

Murat, at present detailed on special secret service, will lead the Cavalry.'

Méneval

(Issuing from the curtain) My God! Across the Rhine!

Napoleon

The Danube! The point of convergence will be Ulm. Your Majesty has seen the despatch from the fleet?

Méneval

Ah, Villeneuve! Villeneuve has taken refuge again

Napoleon

in a hole in the Spanish coast! . . . But if I had hung on Villeneuve, I should still be keeping sheep in Corsica!

Méneval

And so it is Austria that you are going to strike?

Napoleon

Stunned as usual? Yes. The eagle has come down from the ceiling. My 'great army' that faced northward, faces eastward.

Méneval

Still towards your day-star, Glory.

Napoleon

Glory is not my star, but my shadow. I begin *my* march on Asia. Two months hence, I shall dictate peace on the Danube. Yes, my first footprint will be on the Danube. Alexander poured libation on the site of Troy. Well, over the dead body of the Holy Roman Empire, I shall hold the midnight mass in Vienna.

THE END

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

NAPOLEON.

DR. WICKHAM, a country doctor.

ANNE WICKHAM, his wife.

GEOFFREY WICKHAM, their eldest son, twenty-nine years old.

RAYMOND, their second son, twenty years old.

JAN, their third son, twelve years old.

MARGARET, their daughter of seventeen years.

NAN, a nurse.

ÉLISE, niece of Anne Wickham and, like her, of French birth.

MÉNEVAL, secretary to Napoleon.

RUSTAM MAMELOUK, Napoleon's valet.

FIRST ADMIRAL

SECOND ADMIRAL

THIRD ADMIRAL

CAPTAIN OF THE PORT OF BOULOGNE

FIRST LIEUTENANT

SECOND LIEUTENANT

BUCAILLE

BROQUART

DUCHENNE

A COOPER.

A MARINE GUARD.

AN AIDE-DE-CAMP.

AN USHER, A STEWARD.

AN ENGLISH COAST-GUARD.

} of the Navy of France.

} French fishermen captains turned privateersmen.

NOTE

The ruins and tower of St. Radegund's Abbey, in part converted into a farm-house, still exist on a hill a few miles south-west of Dover.

The Abbey was a twelfth-century foundation of the Order of White Canons.

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Trench, Herbert
Napoleon

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